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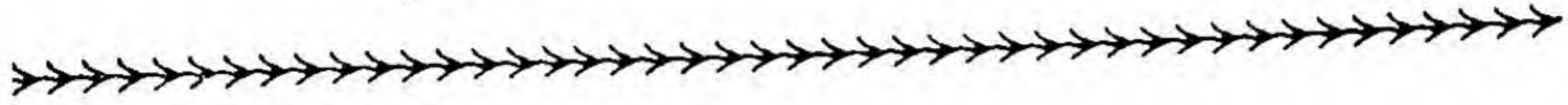
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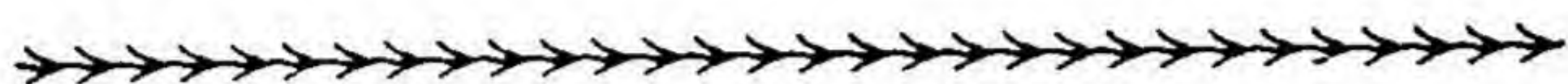




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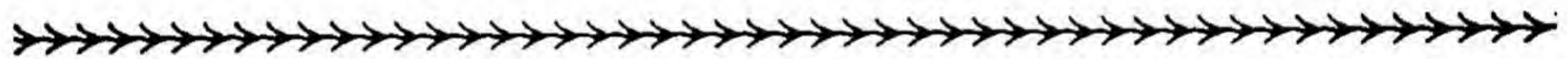


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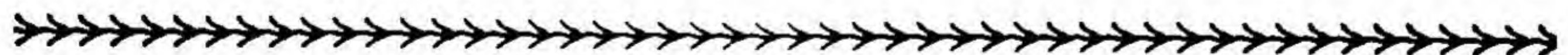




A NEW  
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MODERN  
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# INTRODUCTION

*By Selden Rodman*

**M**ODERN poetry, like all other poetry, is a language devised to communicate those experiences or ideas which defy the deliberate order and pace of prose. The most intense prose, whatever advantage it may have in explicit presentation, is less highly charged with suggestive ambiguity and direct tonal quality than the special language we attempt to describe by the word poetry.

What is modern poetry, and where does it begin? Did it begin in America with Edgar Allan Poe? It certainly began in France toward the middle of the nineteenth century when the younger poets rejected the romanticism of Victor Hugo as inadequate protest against what they considered the anti-poetic materialism of "bourgeois" civilization. But these first poets of the ivory tower—Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Laforgue, Mallarmé—didn't start to influence English poetry until the time of Yeats, and not with any widespread effect until after World War I. Symbolism, then,—the highly personal, associative approach which these poets invented, and which will be discussed later on—is an important (perhaps the most important) element in modern poetry, but it is only one. It doesn't cover the quite different revolt against tradition in America that began with Whitman and survives in Sandburg. Nor do such modern poets as Hopkins and Housman, Elinor Wylie and Edna St. Vincent Millay, Masefield and Hardy and Frost have anything to do with it. Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, with whom the older contemporary anthologists start off, are modern to be sure—but so are Blake and Marvell and Donne. A simple criterion will have to be found.



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W. B. Yeats (who was still alive in both senses when this anthology first appeared) not only knew Gerard Manley Hopkins before the latter's death in 1888; he also attended the famous Tuesday receptions at the apartment of Stephen Mallarmé in Paris *fin de siècle*. There also came the young Paul Valéry. And there symbolist innovation became symbolist doctrine. Ten years later John Masefield, establishing another link with the past, tells us that he was stimulated by the Monday evenings at the London home of W. B. Yeats. Later he would go to the reading room of the British Museum, where he would see that incorrigible old Victorian, Swinburne, deaf and roaring to himself over some obscene impropriety.

Chronologically I have begun with Hopkins, whose poems (though written outside of any tradition whatsoever in the seventies and eighties) appeared in my generation and have had their first influence, already a considerable one, on the younger living poets. Otherwise my rule of thumb has been simply whether the poet lived and wrote in the twentieth century—with Carroll's "Jabberwocky" as the single irrepressible exception.

I say "rule of thumb" because obviously a more important test has been whether the poet, or the poem, seemed "modern" to me. Kipling, for all the recent efforts to trim his imperial feathers, belongs with the great Victorians. A simple definition, broad enough to be comprehensive, would be too broad to be sensible. I shall therefore list a few of what seem to me the characteristics of "modernity," though it may be difficult to dissociate some of them from the hallmarks of true poetry at any time—

*Imagery patterned increasingly on everyday speech*  
*absence of inversions, stilted apostrophes, conventional end-*  
*rhymes, "poetic" language generally, except where used deliberately*  
*for incantatory effect*  
*freedom from the ordinary logic of sequence, jumping from one*



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*image to the next by "association" rather than by the usual cause-effect route*

*emphasis on the ordinary, in reaction against the traditional poetic emphasis on the cosmic*

*concern with the newly identified "unconscious" or with the symbolic "father" as against "the soul"*

*concern with the common man, almost to the exclusion of the "hero" or extraordinary man*

*concern in secular verse with the social order as against "heaven" and "nature," and in non-secular verse with religion as a new field of discovery and imagery like psychoanalysis*

A few of the poets, such as Housman, answer only to the most general of these criteria. But these few have contributed nothing to technical innovation or fresh outlook, and for that reason have had no significant influence.

## II. THE ARRANGEMENT

To avoid rigidity, I have given no titles to the five sections into which this anthology is divided. Their contents should speak for them. The introductory poems set the tone.

In the first part are the immediate forerunners of contemporary poetry as well as certain poets and poems that belong to no classifiable revolt against tradition.

Clearly the second embraces the poets who derive their inspiration from the people and the soil, in rebellion for the rights of both but rebelling within an accepted historical tradition, and in a less experimental style than the poets included in Part IV.

While Yeats himself was influenced not a little by the French symbolist movement, it was not until Pound and Eliot that the whole course of modern verse was transformed by it. Here then is Part III. Pound had been something of a scholar in the Latin



Provençal, Italian and Chinese, as well as in the symbolist language. He had lived in self-imposed exile for twenty-five years. Eliot, whose use of symbolism has been more deliberate and intellectual, has had the largest influence of any living poet. I have concluded the section with Gregory and MacLeish whose styles are clearly evolved from this movement, but whose concern with social and political issues marked a distinct finish to the exile and aristocratic phases of symbolism.

Part IV, in a sense, brings together the matter of II and the manner of III, but in addition many new things of its own. Here, for the first time, the influence of Hopkins' "sprung rhythm"<sup>1</sup> was felt. Satire assumed new strength and importance, especially in the work of W. H. Auden. Revolt against society drove revolt against form into the background. And the new synthesis (social-symbolism, it might be called) inevitably seemed less sharply original, if more outspoken and robust. The transition poet at the end of this section is Auden.

In their original shape Parts I-IV were assembled in 1937. A number of poems have been added since and a like number dropped. But Part V is entirely new and represents only work produced between that date and the beginning of 1946. Advisedly it is introduced and signed off with passages from an elaborate critique of modern poetry—a critique in my opinion refuted by everything printed between these quotations, and most convincingly perhaps by the poetry of Karl Shapiro himself. The dominant theme of these new poets, naturally enough, is war, and the prevailing tendency—religious. The soldier-poets this time (almost all of them) turned away from a materialistic resolution of the paradox that increase of knowledge was engendering increase

<sup>1</sup> This form, occasionally used in old ballads, by Langland in *Piers Ploughman*, and by Milton in the choruses of *Samson Agonistes*, has the advantage of opening up verse to include easily scientific words and conversational rhythms; its principal limitation is the indeterminacy of the stress, since the stresses rather than the syllables are counted. One foot may have one or many syllables.



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of suffering, while the religious poets (all of them) seized upon the catastrophe as a flaming symbol of their quest for God.

The number of poems by which a poet is represented should not necessarily be taken as a judgment of his relative importance. Graves and Frost, Stevens and Sassoon, for example, are fairly represented by one or two poems, while Yeats, whose style has undergone a great many changes and whose influence persists, is inadequately represented by five. The important younger poets, with whose work the public cannot be acquainted, are given space accordingly. A few poems have been chosen not as representative of an author, but for their intrinsic excellence alone. Poems that appeal particularly to the editor—"Channel Firing," "Two Tramps in Mud Time," "Emblems of Conduct," "I think continually of those who were truly great," "Nigger"—are to be found in all sections. His inability to include more of the work of Hardy and Moore is the editor's only regret.

### III. TAKING POETRY OFF THE SHELF

The two outstanding American anthologists of recent years have been Louis Untermeyer and Conrad Aiken. Untermeyer has been notable for his catholic taste (a recent edition of *Modern American and British Poetry* contains no fewer than 1,604 poems). Aiken has been distinguished by his discriminating partiality to the "metaphysical" poets. Very broadly their choices have reflected two viewpoints: that of the New Poetry (heralded by the Chicago "renaissance" of 1912), and that of the Lost Generation whose roots extended back even beyond symbolism to the so-called metaphysicals like Donne.

Neither of these anthologists showed much favor in the thirties to the significant new poetry of social protest, or in the forties to the religious counter-current stimulated by the war. Neither has included any folk-verse. Both have favored the lyric almost to the



exclusion of the characteristic narrative and satirical poetry of our time. Both anthologists have suffered, in my opinion, from an excess of high seriousness; there is hardly a humorous poem or even representation of light verse in the collections of either. Yet:

*“According to his powers each may give;  
Only on varied diet can we live . . .  
The pious fable and the dirty story  
Share in the total literary glory.”*

And one of the major blocks to the popular appreciation of poetry, especially modern poetry, is the conviction that it must be Highly Serious—and consequently Highly Dull. People who dislike the very idea of poetry, says Auden, dislike it as they dislike over-earnest people, “they imagine it is always worrying about the eternal verities. . . . Poetry is no better and no worse than human nature; it is profound and shallow, sophisticated and naïve, dull and witty, bawdy and chaste in turn.”

So, I think, the haunting songs of the Negro people, the Benéts’ verse for children, the bitter *vers de société* of Dorothy Parker, the raucous rhymes of Ogden Nash, the political needling of ‘Sagittarius,’ the parodies and ballads, when phrased with a master’s precision, help to make up what is poetry in our time.

#### IV. THE EXCITEMENT OF POETRY

To read poetry, however, and get the best out of it, does require effort. Poetry may be read on several levels—for its sound, for its content, for its pith, for excitement or for relaxation. But those who read it for merely sentimental reasons, the associations and the pleasing cadences, can hardly expect a visitation of the famous trouble Housman professed to have with his razor when a line of poetry strayed into his mind. “The sentimentalists,” says Yeats, “are practical people who believe in money, in position, in a marriage bell, and whose understanding of happiness is to be so busy.



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whether at work or at play, that all is forgotten but the momentary aim." The aim of poetry is not momentary, though its enjoyment may be. Its full enjoyment is lasting, precisely because it is not written by sentimentalists.

I will mention a few of the many things that are exciting to me in the poems of this collection, not because my reactions are important to anyone but myself, but because they may help some readers to look for other specific things themselves.

I would call attention to the *speed* of Masefield's lines, to the dropping sensation induced by the step-like arrangement of vowel sounds in the line

*"Then down on the mile-long green decline."*

I find exciting transitions like that of the first line of the fourth sonnet in Elinor Wylie's "Wild Peaches," where the lush, dreamy South suddenly becomes the austere, bitten North. Or the frightening shift from contemporary politics to legendary symbolism in Yeats' "The Second Coming."

I would mention the broken last line of the seventh Negro spiritual, where the effect of a sob and of defiance poignantly mingle. Or the intricate weaving of place and time into "Purgatorio," Crane's cry of despair before suicide. Or the effect of the rhyme, like a blow, in the last word of Fleming MacLiesh's "Speech of the Sentry."

Assonance<sup>2</sup> is not new in Wilfred Owen, but it is employed by him to extraordinary effect:

*"They will be swift with swiftness with the tigress,  
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.  
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,  
Wisdom was mine and I had mastery . . ."*

Observe the "lift" in the sprung rhythm of Spender's limpid

<sup>2</sup> The use of imperfect rhyme, where the consonants but not the vowels of the end-words are similar.



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early verse, the combination of delicacy, nobility and tensile strength:

*"It is too late to stay in great houses where the ghosts  
are prisoned . . .*

*Oh comrades, step beautifully from the solid wall  
advance to rebuild and sleep with friend on hill"*

Or the effect of clean distinction when life is breathed into old words under the impact of new ideas—by Muriel Rukeyser's

*"Before they die the brave have set their hand  
On rich particular beauty for their heirs . . ."*

Do these examples seem trivial? Is it a poor definition that a poet's stature may be measured by the number of memorable lines he has written? Of such small things is the stuff of poetry fashioned. . . . But the "grand manner" is no more absent from modern poetry than from any other poetry. You will find it in the conclusion to "Felix Randal" when Hopkins abruptly passes from the pathetic details of his friend's illness to the triumph of his homely deeds. You will find it in the opening lines of Robert Lowell's "Where the Rainbow Ends," and in fact throughout the work of this powerful writer. Or in the magnificent peroration of Auden's vision of a future England:

*"As when Merlin, tamer of horses, and his lords to whom  
Stonehenge was still a thought, the Pillars passed  
And into the undared ocean swung north their prow,  
Drives through the night and star-concealing dawn  
For the virgin roadsteads of our hearts an unwavering keel."*

## V. IS MODERN POETRY DIFFICULT?

If it is the business of poetry not merely to convey information, but to provide for the reader precisely those "vibrations" experienced by the writer, is it small wonder that the demand upon



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the reader's sensitivity and concentration is great? Shall we be shocked to find that much poetry in every age has been "difficult"? And is it surprising that for the full enjoyment of important poetry as much attention and understanding are required as an intelligent music-lover will devote to the intricate structure of a fugue? Yet superficially the music, like the poem, may be enjoyable to everyone who hears it. For like music "poetry often communicates when one does not understand it, and even when written in a language which one knows very imperfectly."

There has been difficult poetry in every age, then. But in periods of transition and social upheaval, when ideas, attitudes and even language are uprooted or in process of reconstruction, poetry has been correspondingly complex. That it has proved, at such times, to be correspondingly rewarding, is a fact that has sometimes been left to later generations to discover. Such epochs, and our own is no exception, have produced plenty of poetry that may be enjoyed with a minimum of effort. And the most subtle craftsmen in such a period, as witness James Joyce in our own, have occasionally written with piercing directness. But the fact of complexity remains.

"If a poet writes entirely in metaphor, using rare words only," said Aristotle at a time when poetry was going through another of its periodic crises, "the result is jargon." "But," he wisely added, "he who uses merely commonplace words sacrifices all to clarity." There is a new directness perceptible in the work of the poets included in the final part of this anthology. The intimately personal communication of Rexroth, the brutally frank sentiment of Patchen, the almost-flat honesty of Fuller and Lewis, the colloquial wit of Shapiro, bear witness to it in their fashions. But simplicity of utterance is not to be confused with simplicity of thought, or with naïveté. These are sensitive writers at grips with an ever more complex environment. They are not satisfied with appearances. "If you seek the kernel," Meister Eckhart wrote, "then you must break the shell. And likewise if you would know the



reality of Nature, you must destroy the appearance, and the farther you go beyond the appearance, the nearer you will be to the essence."

# VI. WHAT MAKES IT OBSCURE?

Let us admit, however, that two characteristics of contemporary verse have stood between the poets and a healthy audience: a philosophy of isolation and a private language.

The first of these began in France in the mid-nineteenth century when artists, as we observed, were expressing their revolt by retreating into some form of dream-world of their own making. Great poets, intense but too isolated to contribute to the development of a tradition in accord with the new social and scientific facts, rose on the crest of this first symbolist tide. One of them, Rimbaud, carried his escape so far as to anticipate such a recent phenomenon as surrealism. The following passage from his most mature work is self-explanatory—and prophetic:

"One must be modern completely . . . I loved meaningless door-tops, backgrounds, acrobats' back-cloths, signboards, popular prints, old-fashioned literature, church Latin, misspelled erotica, . . . I invented the color of the vowels!—A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green . . . I accustomed myself to simple hallucination: I saw quite freely a mosque in place of a factory, a school of drums made by the angels, a drawing-room at the bottom of a lake . . . I finished by finding the disorder of my senses sacred."

Poets who followed him, if they did not carry their burden to the same extremity, were content to develop some particular facet of the hard symbolist jewel. The late Paul Valéry, for example, battened upon the precious myth of the poet's unproductivity. Self-consciously he would work upon a single poem, for years and years, treating it as a piece of sculpture to be admired for its form only.



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Ruling out verse that is full of passion or deliberately intelligible, he likened poetry to a heavy load which the poet carts to the roof bit by bit and then drops all at once on the poor unsuspecting reader who passes below. "Enthusiasm," he stated, "is not an artist's state of mind." And small wonder that the puritanism of this doctrine (which found American spokesmen in Yvor Winters and Allen Tate) was capable of awakening small enthusiasm in the reading public.

But symbolism, as I have endeavored to show in explaining the arrangement of the present collection, is not a piece of eccentric baggage to be tossed overboard lightly. For better or worse, it is part of the structure of the ship. And modern poetry, unless we would scuttle it entirely, must be an intricate, nicely balanced vessel if it is to ride the troubled cross-currents of our world.

If the philosophy of much modern poetry contributed to isolating it from all but a priesthood, the language which that philosophy called into being acted as a still more serious deterrent. For the style was bound to persist long after the attitudes themselves became unfashionable. Thus, for example, much of what has been loosely called "proletarian" poetry was written (ironically) in the same private, filigree manner with which the poet was wont to embellish the interior of his ivory tower.

C. Day Lewis<sup>3</sup> once pointed to the association-of-ideas technique, employed by T. S. Eliot and his followers, as a major cause of obscurity in post-World War I poetry. The poet takes over a sequence of images from psychology's exploration of the "unconscious"—and then presents them *as in psychic life* without the logical connections.

Another source of obscurity has been the modern poet's attempt

<sup>3</sup> A short list of the best studies of modern poetry, for which this introduction may serve as a summary, might include Mr. Lewis's *A Hope for Poetry*, Axel's *Castle* by Edmund Wilson, *Hart Crane* by Philip Horton, *The Name and Nature of Poetry* by A. E. Housman, *This Modern Poetry* by Babette Deutsch and Stephen Spender's *The Destructive Element*.



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to compete with the clanging rhythms and inchoate life of the city. This often leads, when the material is poorly digested, to more confusion than one finds even in the poet who deliberately escapes from the city into a private, pastoral world of his own. Furthermore the city poet, often finding himself isolated from any genuine contact with his fellows, fails to derive that benefit from the group which has enriched art in all periods of great achievement. At such a time, he finds himself necessarily talking to those fellow-intellectuals who can readily share his frustration.

### VII. DOES SCIENCE CONFLICT WITH IT?

Every five years or so, somebody announces in a solemn voice that poetry is dead. Coleridge, great romantic that he was, started the critics off a hundred years ago when he announced that poetry, in opposition to science, was after pleasure, rather than truth. Even so astute a critic as Edmund Wilson fell victim to this delusion. In the twenties he shook his head when T. S. Eliot ventured the belief that poetry would be reinstated on the stage. In the thirties, with that miracle on the way to modest accomplishment (by Eliot himself, among others), Mr. Wilson sadly noted the decline of Edna St. Vincent Millay and informed us that prose, and prose alone, was the medium of the future.

Both of these arguments arise from a fundamental misconception of the role of poetry. Poetry, as Hart Crane said, is an architectural art "based not on Evolution or the idea of progress, but on the articulation of the contemporary human consciousness *sub specie aeternitatis*, and inclusive of all readjustments incident to science and other shifting factors related to that consciousness." The function of poetry in this age is similar to its function in any age; and it is notable that the machine is being assimilated by the younger poets today with far less self-consciousness than by Crane himself—and for the very reasons which he himself described with such insight:

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"The emotional stimulus of machinery is on an entirely different psychic plane from that of poetry. Its only menace lies in its capacities for facile entertainment, so easily accessible as to arrest the development of any but the most negligible aesthetic responses . . . Unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e. *acclimatize* it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles and all the other human associations of the past, then poetry has failed of its full contemporary function. This process does not infer any program nor does it essentially involve even the specific mention of a single mechanical contrivance. It demands, however, along with the traditional qualifications of the poet, an extraordinary capacity for surrender, at least temporarily, to the sensations of urban life. . . ."

Max Eastman, one of the leading literary worshippers of science, maintains that science has withdrawn intellect from literature. He goes so far as to say that nothing is left for the poets but to sing. "It is not their function to conceive things truly but to live them vividly." But while ignoring completely the role of poetry in "articulating contemporary human consciousness" and giving form to it, Mr. Eastman disregards an almost equally important function of the poet. Science does not and cannot make men feel, much less act. Nor does science as such, any more than sociology as such, give modern man that confidence in his own dignity and essential nobility which is necessary for the translation of mere animal energy into aspirations, aspirations into deeds. A great scientist must be a poet also. He must have vision to exceed precepts and conceive what never was. But a poet need not be a scientist, though his mind must have equal integrity, daring and orderliness. "No amount of psychological experimentation," a leading modern biologist has said, "can reveal the profundities of an emotional situation like a single poem."

A great scientist or a great prophet or a great revolutionary must



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be singleminded. For the success of his enterprise, his dedication must be complete. When Millikan writes of religion or politics he writes as a child. Lenin, according to Maxim Gorky, listened to a Beethoven sonata with a feeling of guilt—"It affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid, nice things and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this vile hell."

But a poet must be a whole man, else he will never see the relationship between things, the dualities and incongruities, yes, and the permanencies that makes sonnets and sonatas. Imagine this scene. An old man, poorly clad, totters down the steps of a library with his eyes fixed ahead of him. Our three "doers"—the scientist, statesman and priest—will want to do something about him, and rightly. They will prescribe medicine, old-age pensions or prayer, as the case may be. But the poet, while acknowledging the necessity for some of these remedies, is not looking primarily for a "cure." His poem may end with an exhortation, bidding the old man shake his fist as he did in his youth, but he will see the situation symbolically. He may see the futility of years of knowledge that have left the old man still staring blankly into the void. He may see the unconquerable impulse that sends him to the library with his remaining strength. Or he may see him as one in whose veins, quickened by the passionate lines of some other poet, blossom again dimly remembered Springs.

In any case one may be sure that the poet who captures the incident in any one of its symbolic relationships will, if he does so intensely, communicate something to the reader that the reader will never get from a description conceived in terms of its "cure." The cure, if there is one, comes afterward. If the reader's sensibilities have been moved, his will may be charged also. At the very least, the lens of his eye will have been adjusted to receive more light. For art, along with science, is one of the valid ways of communicating knowledge about reality. And it is even quite possible, as one scientist has suggested, that tomorrow, following this era in



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which materialistic conceptions have proven inadequate in the very fields where they achieved their greatest triumphs, "values will be regarded as inherent in reality."

### VIII. DOES PROPAGANDA CANCEL IT?

Shall we infer from this that "propaganda" has no place in poetry? That aesthetic values are independent of all other values? That because the poem often grows out of no more than an abstract rhythmical impulse, the idea which it later embodies is not a product of the whole man? Shall we agree with the early T. S. Eliot, for instance, that moral, didactic, emotional, religious, historical and political purposes are the spheres of prose alone—purposes *in spite of which* "poetry" has sometimes emerged and survived? Shall we concur in his pedantic definition of poetry as "not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; not an expression of personality, but an escape from personality?"

I think we are getting away from this most unhistorical view of poetry today. We acknowledge, to be sure, that religious fervor and "sound" politics do not necessarily produce poetry. But we observe that the very greatest poetry, and certainly the most monumental, was written by men who vaunted their extra-aesthetic intentions and who, if they were not actually out to instruct, were certainly anxious to expound.

It is even possible that we are returning to Matthew Arnold's rather heavy view of poetry as "criticism of life in which our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay"—but I think not. This definition is as narrow on the moral side as Eliot's is on the aesthetic. For though it is true, as Spender says, that the greatest art is moral "even when the artist has no particular axe to grind," and that in revolutionary times issues of war and peace and social justice tend to make issues of private morality and manners seem almost insignificant—poetry, to remain poetry, must deal with all of these larger questions in terms of the emotions generated



by the smaller, in terms of human values rather than "party lines"; it must stand on the plane of *choice* where tragedy or acceptance are the alternatives, rather than on the plane of *conversion* where the poles are heresy or conformity only.

Propaganda is concerned with telling people what to do; poetry, at least the social poetry generated in times like ours, with "extending our knowledge of good and evil, perhaps making the necessity for action more urgent, and its nature more clear." Where the mind is still free, neither complacent nor shackled to the past nor servile to the discipline of the future, there will poetry flourish.

## IX. THE POET'S PLACE

The most demanding, but the most rewarding view of the poet's function that we have is Emerson's. The poet, he said, is the "complete man" who "apprises us not of his wealth, but of the commonwealth." In recent years we have strayed far from this definition—to poetry's loss and the poet's, as well as the public's. If we have come to regard poetry as something to be taken with breathless ceremony on the rarest of occasions, it is because we have ceased to think of the poet as "the utterer of the necessary and the casual."

Poetry is the greatest of the arts because everyone can—and does—practise it. The ad-man and the gag-man, the housewife and the corner grocer are latent poets. The poetry of Carl Sandburg is memorable not because it gives words and ideas imperishable shape (it rarely does), but because it captures and records lovingly the poetry in the common speech, attitudes and aspirations of the people. It is hardly surprising that in a young civilization like America's the most original and indigenous art is to be found in the anonymous outpourings of the oppressed Negro. Or that in a nation of immigrants a new tongue is being constantly enriched by the overtones of diverse cultures. The last speech of Vanzetti, eloquent with compassion and anguish, falls into lines as easily as the frost



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into crystals. Thomas Wolfe, the novelist who wanted above all else to be a poet, wrote naturally and unconsciously *in verse*. Peter Bowman, who writes in unrhymed metres the first soldier's account of Pacific combat in World War II, insists that he is producing "sprung prose"! A confusion exists, but it bespeaks health: form is not frozen and refuses to freeze while the poet remains a whole man, exercising his heart.

"The experience of each new age requires a new confession," and the utterance of that confession in such an unequivocal medium as language requires every instrument in expression's orchestra. "It is not metres," said Emerson, "but a metre-making argument that makes a poem." And never in history has a people been faced with more urgent matters for argument. If anybody should be above the battle, it is the poet. If anybody should be *in* the battle, it is he. He alone must take sides and still reserve half his sympathy for the enemy. His heart must be involved, but his mind clear as spring water.

Nothing can be too ugly, too sordid, too brutal, too immediate, too mean to evoke the poet's interest. Yet his own sensibilities must be incorruptible; he must be virtuous, if not chaste; devout without subscribing to creeds; humble, but not pious. "On the brink of the waters of life and truth" we may be miserably dying, but the poet, if he comes down, as Milton urged, from the wine and generous living of his natural state to drink water out of a wooden bowl, may impart life to a whole generation. . . .

## X. THE FUTURE

We Americans should be proud of our poetry, but we are not. Poe and Emerson, Whitman, Emily Dickinson and Frost, Vachel Lindsay and Eliot, the anonymous authors of the spirituals and chanteys, have contributed to the literature of the world. What other art in America has as much to show? Yet we honor poetry, if



at all, with a jingling column in the morning paper, stuff it in the cracks of a magazine as a space-filler, at best pay perfunctory homage once a year with a professors' prize.

The poet himself is looked at askance; we are not quite sure it is a man's job he is doing. It is safe enough to admire the professional rabbit-poetry of the prize-winners. But a Hemingway or a Sandburg, who has been photographed with a fishing-tackle or a guitar, is accepted almost in spite of his literary accomplishments. It would be an almost insurmountable handicap if a man in public life were discovered, like a Milton or a Lorenzo de' Medici, to write good poetry.

Our poets themselves take refuge from notoriety in a double life, or, like Jeffers, seal themselves away from the people in some "tower beyond tragedy." The communication and integration of ideas that New England knew in Emerson's time is a long way from us. Yet this community of experience has been a phenomenon of every creative epoch from Athens and Rome to Florence, Weimar, Paris and London.

In the thirties, in the brotherhood of the younger English poets, there was a portent of change. Its immediate effect was not only to stimulate the leaders of this group themselves, but to attract to their standard a number of lesser talents, quickening their production, quantitatively and qualitatively, increasing their self-confidence. In Madrid, during the Spanish Civil War, where these sophisticated poets enjoyed a brief encounter with the more naïve and earthy writers of Eastern Europe and Latin America, it seemed possible for a moment that folk art and Western symbolism would enrich each other. Such a transfusion does appear in some measure to have been effected during the occupation of France in the early forties.

We have greater potentialities for a vital national literature in America. Our manner of speech is necessarily more "public." Our traditions are less smothering, the very resources of our land are



## INTRODUCTION

more promising. The country that was big enough for Poe and Whitman at the same time is still big enough.

Our younger poets have taken the first steps. They were beginning in the thirties, as I believe the fourth part of this anthology indicated, to fuse the naturalistic and the symbolic in a new synthesis. They knew that neither science nor sociology could be rejected. They knew, too, that they could not become the slaves of either of these. The dilemma in another form had been faced successfully before, and it could be again. And the synthesis might be broadened to include the integration of conscious and unconscious experience, of man and machine, but above all the creative individual life balanced with the constant effort to help shape the face of the world in which the poet, like everyone else, must live.

Now in the forties the revolt against intellectualism promises to go much further, sweeping away in its wake even the rational determinism to which so many of the poets of the thirties clung. We have lived, John Heath-Stubbs reminds us (comparing unfavorably the age of Congreve to that of Pope):

“. . . in a rounded time, rounded  
With a low horizon of feeling . . .  
We have forgotten the old high modes of loving,  
And the song's poise is gone.  
The intellect squats twisted like a spider,  
A tortured, hunch-backed poet.”

By those who resent the revolt against our own “low horizon of feeling,” Karl Shapiro has been severely criticized for deploring the isolated supremacy of the intellectual. Auden has been accused of feeling guilty over “the primary fission of the germ-cell instead of over that primary fission of the atom which produced in a few minutes half a million casualties.” The French poet Aragon has been vilified for mixing his poems of the Resistance with poems of sensuous love.



Eliot, whose recent work like Auden's has sung the virtues of humility, has tried to match that theme with a like simplicity of utterance. But, as Louise Bogan remarks, "while a Browning or a Tennyson could go blustering back to feeling after war, the modern poet must break down the defenses that exist from top to bottom of our culture against the 'soft' and the 'corny.' He must skirt deeper bogs and darker thickets than his nineteenth-century brothers in order to get himself and his audience out into open emotional territory." The social poet who identifies himself with his audience, no matter how critically, will be called an opportunist. The war poet who refuses to see war as a simple dichotomy but as a universal tragedy has in every age had to wait until the partisans were in their shallow graves. The poet of feeling can expect to be branded a philistine. And the religious poet, if he is not accused of merely escaping into the church, will be charged with resuscitating a forgotten language and encouraging still another confusion in belief.

The fact remains, notwithstanding, that the new poets, whether concerned with the state, with war, with feeling or with God, seem guided by a sense of responsibility toward their readers and a taking-for-granted of the immediacy of poetry to contemporary speech<sup>4</sup> that sets them apart from their predecessors. It is becoming possible, we note for example, to write 'modern' poetry in forms recently discarded as outworn. Perhaps what we sense is that a revolution was accomplished in the twenties and that the new poets are legitimately at work in fields that had been too freshly ploughed for the ground-breakers to cultivate.

<sup>4</sup> "Every revolution in poetry," writes T. S. Eliot in *The Music of Poetry*, "is apt to be, and sometimes announces itself as, a return to common speech . . . No poetry, of course, is ever exactly the same speech as the poet talks and hears: but it has to be in such a relation to the speech of his time that the listener or reader can say 'that is how I should talk if I could write poetry.' This is the reason why the very best contemporary poetry can give us a feeling of excitement and a sense of fulfilment different from any sentiment aroused by even very much greater poetry of a past age."



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**\* PART ONE \***

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**POETRY**

*I TOO, dislike it: there are things that are important  
beyond all this fiddle.*

*Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it,  
one discovers in*

*it after all, a place for the genuine.*

*Hands that can grasp, eyes*

*that can dilate, hair that can rise*

*if it must, these things are important not because*

*high sounding interpretation can be put upon them*

*but because they are*

*useful. When they become so derivative*

*as to become unintelligible,*

*the same thing may be said for all of us, that we*

*do not admire what*

*we cannot understand: the bat,*

*holding on upside down or in quest of something*

*eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll,*

*a tireless wolf under*



## MODERN POETRY

*a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin  
like a horse that feels a flea, the base-  
ball fan, the statistician—  
nor is it valid*

*to discriminate against 'business documents and*

*school-books'; all these phenomena are important.*

*One must make a distinction  
however: when dragged into prominence by half-poets,  
the result is not poetry,  
nor till the poets among us can be  
'literalists of  
the imagination'—above  
insolence and triviality and can present*

*for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in  
them, shall we have*

*it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,  
the raw material of poetry in  
all its rawness and  
that which is on the other hand  
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.*

MARIANNE MOORE



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**\* T H O M A S H A R D Y \***

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**AFTERWARDS**

**W**HEN the Present has latched its postern behind my  
tremulous stay,

And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like  
wings,

Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbors say,

“He was a man who used to notice such things”?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid’s soundless blink,

The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight

Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,

“To him this must have been a familiar sight.”

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and  
warm,

When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,

One may say, “He strove that such innocent creatures  
should come to no harm,

But he could do little for them; and now he is gone.”

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they  
stand at the door,

Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,

Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face  
no more,

“He was one who had an eye for such mysteries”?



*MODERN POETRY*

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in  
the gloom,

And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its out-rollings,  
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,

"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things"?



**HARDY**

**CHANNEL FIRING**

**THAT** night your great guns, unawares,  
Shook all our coffins as we lay,  
And broke the chancel window-squares,  
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome  
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:  
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,  
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;  
It's gunnery practice out at sea  
Just as before you went below;  
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make  
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters  
They do no more for Christ's sake  
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment-hour  
For some of them's a blessed thing,  
For if it were they'd have to scour  
Hell's floor for so much threatening.

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when  
I blow the trumpet (if indeed  
I ever do; for you are men,  
And rest eternal sorely need)."



MODERN POETRY

So down we lay again. "I wonder,  
Will the world ever saner be,"  
Said one, "than when He sent us under  
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.  
"Instead of preaching forty year,"  
My neighbor Parson Thirdly said,  
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,  
Roaring their readiness to avenge,  
As far inland as Stourton Tower,  
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

*April 1914.*



\* L E W I S C A R R O L L \*

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## JABBERWOCKY

**T**WAS brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought—]  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.



*MODERN POETRY*

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”  
He chortled in his joy.

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.



PIED BEAUTY

GLORY be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and  
plough;  
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.



DUNS SCOTUS'S OXFORD

TOWER city and branchy between towers;  
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarméd, lark-charméd, rook-  
racked, river-rounded;  
The dapple-eared lily below thee; that country and town  
did  
Once encounter in, here coped and poiséd powers;

Thou hast a base and brickish skirt there, sours  
That neighbour-nature thy grey beauty is grounded  
Best in; graceless growth, thou hast confounded  
Rural rural keeping—folk, flocks and flowers.

Yet ah! this air I gather and I release  
He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are  
what  
He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to  
peace;

Of realty the rarest-veinéd unraveller; a not  
Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;  
Who fired France for Mary without spot.



FRAGMENT

STRIKE, churl; hurl, cheerless wind, then; heltering hail  
S May's beauty massacre and wispéd wild clouds grow  
Out on the giant air; tell Summer No,  
Bid joy back, have at the harvest, keep Hope pale.



FELIX RANDAL

FELIX RANDAL the farrier. O he is dead then? my duty all ended,  
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-  
handsome

Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some  
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient he cursed at first, but mended  
Being anointed and all; though a heavenlier heart began some  
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom  
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.  
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,  
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;

How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,  
When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,  
Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering  
sandal'



From REYNARD THE FOX

FROM the Gallows Hill to the Tineton Copse  
There were ten ploughed fields, like ten full-stops,  
All wet red clay, where a horse's foot  
Would be swathed, feet thick, like an ash-tree root.  
The fox raced on, on the headlands firm,  
Where his swift feet scared the coupling worm;  
The rooks rose raving to curse him raw,  
He snarled a sneer at their swoop and caw.  
Then on, then on, down a half-ploughed field  
Where a ship-like plough drove glitter-keeled,  
With a bay horse near and a white horse leading,  
And a man saying "Zook," and the red earth bleeding.  
He gasped as he saw the ploughman drop  
The stilts and swear at the team to stop.  
The ploughman ran in his red clay clogs,  
Crying, "Zick un, Towzer; zick, good dogs!"  
A couple of wire-haired lurchers lean  
Arose from his wallet, nosing keen;  
With a rushing swoop they were on his track,  
Putting chest to stubble to bite his back.  
He swerved from his line with the curs at heel,  
The teeth as they missed him clicked like steel.  
With a worrying snarl, they quartered on him,  
While the ploughman shouted, "Zick; upon him."

\*



*MODERN POETRY*

The fox raced on, up the Barton Balks,  
With a crackle of kex in the nettle stalks,  
Over Hammond's grass to the dark green line  
Of the larch-wood smelling of turpentine.  
Scratch Steven Larches, black to the sky,  
A sadness breathing with one long sigh,  
Grey ghosts of trees under funeral plumes,  
A mist of twig over soft brown glooms.  
As he entered the wood he heard the smacks,  
Chip-jar, of the fir-pole feller's axe.  
He swerved to the left to a broad green ride,  
Where a boy made him rush for the farther side.  
He swerved to the left, to the Barton Road,  
But there were the timerers come to load—  
Two timer carts and a couple of carters  
With straps round their knees instead of garters.  
He swerved to the right, straight down the wood,  
The carters watched him, the boy hallooed.  
He leaped from the larch-wood into tillage,  
The cobbler's garden of Barton village.

\*

The cobbler bent at his wooden foot,  
Beating sprigs in a broken boot;  
He wore old glasses with thick horn rim,  
He scowled at his work for his sight was dim.  
His face was dingy, his lips were grey,  
From primming sparrowbills day by day.  
As he turned his boot he heard a noise  
At his garden-end, and he thought, "It's boys."  
Like a rocket shot to a ship ashore  
The lean red bolt of his body tore,  
Like a ripple of wind running swift on grass;  
Like a shadow on wheat when a cloud blows past,



## MASEFIELD

Like a turn at the buoy in a cutter sailing  
When the bright green gleam lips white at the railing,  
Like the April snake whipping back to sheath,  
Like the gannets' hurtle on fish beneath,  
Like a kestrel chasing, like a sickle reaping,  
Like all things swooping, like all things sweeping,  
Like a hound for stay, like a stag for swift,  
With his shadow beside like spinning drift.

\*

Past the gibbet-stock all stuck with nails,  
Where they hanged in chains what had hung at jails,  
Past Ashmundshowe where Ashmund sleeps,  
And none but the tumbling peewit weeps,  
Past Curlew Calling, the gaunt grey corner  
Where the curlew comes as a summer mourner,  
Past Blowbury Beacon, shaking his fleece,  
Where all winds hurry and none brings peace;  
Then down on the mile-long green decline,  
Where the turf's like spring and the air's like wine,  
Where the sweeping spurs of the downland spill  
Into Wan Brook Valley and Wan Dyke Hill.

\*

On he went with a galloping rally  
Past Maesbury Clump for Wan Brook Valley.  
The blood in his veins went romping high,  
"Get on, on, on, to the earth or die."  
The air of the downs went purely past  
Till he felt the glory of going fast,  
Till the terror of death, though there indeed,  
Was lulled for a while by his pride of speed.  
He was romping away from the hounds and hunt,  
He had Wan Dyke Hill and his earth in front,



## *MODERN POETRY*

In a one mile more when his point was made  
He would rest in safety from dog or spade;  
Nose between paws he would hear the shout  
Of the "Gone to earth!" to the hounds without,  
The whine of the hounds, and their cat-feet gadding  
Scratching the earth, and their breath pad-padding;  
He would hear the horn call hounds away,  
And rest in peace till another day.



\* A. E. HOUSMAN \*

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OTHERS, I AM NOT THE FIRST

O<sup>T</sup>H<sup>E</sup>R<sup>S</sup>, I am not the first,  
Have willed more mischief than they durst  
If in the breathless night I too  
Shiver now, 'tis nothing new.

More than I, if truth were told,  
Have stood and sweated hot and cold,  
And through their reins in ice and fire  
Fear contended with desire.

Agued once like me were they,  
But I like them shall win my way  
Lastly to the bed of mould  
Where there's neither heat nor cold.

But from my grave across my brow  
Plays no wind of healing now,  
And fire and ice within me fight  
Beneath the suffocating night.



MODERN POETRY

1887

FROM Clee to heaven the beacon burns,  
The shires have seen it plain,  
From north and south the sign returns  
And beacons burn again.

Look left, look right, the hills are bright,  
The dales are light between,  
Because 'tis fifty years tonight  
That God has saved the Queen.

Now, when the flame they watch not towers  
Above the soil they trod,  
Lads, we'll remember friends of ours  
Who shared the work with God.

To skies that knit their heartstrings right,  
To fields that bred them brave,  
The saviours come not home tonight:  
Themselves they could not save.

It dawns in Asia, tombstones show  
And Shropshire names are read;  
And the Nile spills his overflow  
Beside the Severn's dead.

We pledge in peace by farm and town  
The Queen they served in war,  
And fire the beacons up and down  
The land they perished for.



*HOUSMAN*

'God save the Queen' we living sing,  
From height to height 'tis heard;  
And with the rest your voices ring,  
Lads of the Fifty-third.

Oh, God will save her, fear you not:  
Be you the men you've been  
Get you the sons your fathers got,  
And God will save the Queen.



TERENCE, THIS IS STUPID STUFF

**T**ERENCE, this is stupid stuff:  
You eat your victuals fast enough;  
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,  
To see the rate you drink your beer.  
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make  
It gives a chap the belly-ache.  
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;  
It sleeps well, the horned head:  
We poor lads, 'tis our turn now  
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.  
Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme  
Your friends to death before their time  
Moping melancholy mad:  
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad.'

Why, if 'tis dancing you would be,  
There's brisker pipes than poetry.  
Say, for what were hop-yards meant,  
Or why was Burton built on Trent?  
Oh many a peer of England brews  
Livelier liquor than the Muse,  
And malt does more than Milton can  
To justify God's ways to man.  
Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink  
For fellows whom it hurts to think:

Look into the pewter pot  
To see the world as the world's not.  
And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past:  
The mischief is that 'twill not last.



### *HOUSMAN*

Oh I have been to Ludlow fair  
And left my necktie God knows where,  
And carried half way home, or near,  
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer:  
Then the world seemed none so bad,  
And I myself a sterling lad;  
And down in lovely muck I've lain,  
Happy till I woke again.  
Then I saw the morning sky:  
Heigho, the tale was all a lie;  
The world, it was the old world yet,  
I was I, my things were wet,  
And nothing now remained to do  
But begin the game anew.

Therefore, since the world has still  
Much good, but much less good than ill,  
And while the sun and moon endure  
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,  
I'd face it as a wise man would,  
And train for ill and not for good.  
'Tis true, the stuff I bring for sale  
Is not so brisk a brew as ale:  
Out of a stem that scored the hand  
I wrung it in a weary land.  
But take it: if the smack is sour,  
The better for the embittered hour;  
It should do good to heart and head  
When your soul is in my soul's stead;  
And I will friend you, if I may  
In the dark and cloudy day.

There was a king reigned in the East:  
There, when kings will sit to feast,



*MODERN POETRY*

They get their fill before they think  
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.  
He gathered all that springs to birth  
From the many-venomed earth;  
First a little, thence to more,  
He sampled all her killing store;  
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,  
Sate the king when healths went round.  
They put arsenic in his meat  
And stared aghast to watch him eat;  
They poured strychnine in his cup  
And shook to see him drink it up:  
They shook, they stared as white's their shirt;  
Them it was their poison hurt.  
—I tell the tale that I heard told.  
Mithridates, he died old.



\* W A L T E R D E L A M A R ]

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## THE LISTENERS

IS THERE anybody there?' said the Traveller,  
Knocking on the moonlit door;  
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses  
Of the forest's ferny floor:  
And a bird flew up out of a turret,  
Above the Traveller's head:  
And he smote upon the door again a second time;  
'Is there anybody there?' he said.  
But no one descended to the Traveller;  
No head from the leaf-fringed sill  
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,  
Where he stood perplexed and still.  
But only a host of phantom listeners  
That dwelt in the lone house then  
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight  
To that voice from the world of men:  
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark  
That goes down to the empty hall,  
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken  
By the lonely Traveller's call.  
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,  
Their stillness answering his cry,  
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,  
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;



*MODERN POETRY*

For he suddenly smote on the door, even  
Louder, and lifted his head:—  
‘Tell them I came, and no one answered,  
That I kept my word,’ he said.  
Never the least stir made the listeners,  
Though every word he spake  
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house  
From the one man left awake:  
Aye, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,  
And the sound of iron on stone,  
And how the silence surged softly backward,  
When the plunging hoofs were gone.



JOHANNES MILTON, SENEX

SINCE I believe in God the Father Almighty  
Man's Maker and Judge, Overruler of Fortune,  
'Twere strange should I praise anything and refuse Him  
praise,

Should love the creature forgetting the Creator,  
Nor unto Him in suff'ring and sorrow turn me:  
Nay how cou'd I withdraw me from His embracing?

But since that I have seen not, and cannot know Him,  
Nor in my earthly temple apprehend rightly  
His wisdom and the heav'nly purpose eternal;  
Therefore will I be bound to no studied system  
Nor argument, nor with delusion enslave me,  
Nor seek to please Him in any foolish invention  
Which my spirit within me, that loveth beauty  
And hateth evil, hath reprov'd as unworthy:

But I cherish my freedom in loving service,  
Gratefully adoring for delight beyond asking  
Or thinking, and in hours of anguish and darkness  
Confiding always on His excellent greatness.



\* ROBERT GRAVES \*

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THE EREMITES

WE MAY well wonder at those froward hermits  
Who like the scorpion and the basilisk  
Crouched in the desert sands, to undo  
Their scurfy flesh with tortures.

They drank from pools fouled by the ass and camel,  
Chewed uncooked millet pounded between stones,  
Wore but a shame-rag, dusk or dawn,  
And rolled in thorny places.

In the wilderness there are no women;  
Yet hermits harbour in their shrunken loins  
A penetential paradise,  
A leaping-house of glory.

Solomons of a thousand lusty love-chants,  
These goatish men, burned Aethiopian black,  
Kept vigil till the angelic whores  
Should lift the latch of pleasure.

And what Atellan orgies of the soul  
Were celebrated then among the rocks  
They testify themselves in books  
That rouse Atellan laughter.



## GRAVES

Haled back at last to wear the ring and m'tre,  
They clipped their beards and, for their stomachs' sake,  
Drank now and then a little wine,  
And tasted cakes and honey.

Observe then how they disciplined the daughters  
Of noble widows, who must fast and thirst,  
Abjure down-pillows, rouge and curls,  
Deform their delicate bodies:

Whose dreams were curiously beset with visions  
Of stinking hermits in a wilderness  
Pressing unnatural lusts on them  
Until they wakened screaming.

Such was the virtue of our pious fathers:  
To refine pleasure in the hungry dream.  
Pity for them, but pity too for us—  
Our beds by their leave lain in.



## MODERN POETRY

### THE LAUREATE

**L**IKE a lizard in the sun, though not scuttling  
When men approach, this wretch, this thing of rage,  
Scowls and sits rhyming in his horny age.

His time and truth he has not bridged to ours,  
But shrivelled by long heliotropic idling  
He croaks at us his out-of-date humours.

Once long ago here was a poet; who died.  
See how remorse twitching his mouth proclaims  
It was no natural death, but suicide.

Arrogant, lean, unvenerable, he  
Still turns for comfort to the western flames  
That glitter a cold span above the sea.



\* E L I N O R W Y L I E \*

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## WILD PEACHES

### 1

**W**HEN the world turns completely upside down  
You say we'll emigrate to the Eastern Shore  
Aboard a river-boat from Baltimore;  
We'll live among wild peach trees, miles from town  
You'll wear a coonskin cap, and I a gown  
Homespun, dyed butternut's dark gold colour.  
Lost, like your lotus-eating ancestor,  
We'll swim in milk and honey till we drown.

The winter will be short, the summer long,  
The autumn amber-hued, sunny and hot,  
Tasting of cider and of scuppernong;  
All seasons sweet, but autumn best of all.  
The squirrels in their silver fur will fall  
Like falling leaves, like fruit, before your shot.

The autumn frosts will lie upon the grass  
Like bloom on grapes of purple-brown and gold.  
The misted early mornings will be cold;  
The little puddles will be roofed with glass.  
The sun, which burns from copper into brass,  
Melts these at noon, and makes the boys unfold  
Their knitted mufflers; full as they can hold,  
Fat pockets dribble chestnuts as they pass.



Peaches grow wild, and pigs can live in clover;  
A barrel of salted herrings lasts a year;  
The spring begins before the winter's over.  
By February you may find the skins  
Of garter snakes and water moccasins  
Dwindled and harsh, dead-white and cloudy-clear.

3

When April pours the colours of a shell  
Upon the hills, when every little creek  
Is shot with silver from the Chesapeake  
In shoals new-minted by the ocean swell,  
When strawberries go begging, and the sleek  
Blue plums lie open to the blackbird's beak,  
We shall live well—we shall live very well.

The months between the cherries and the peaches  
Are brimming cornucopias which spill  
Fruits red and purple, sombre-bloomed and black;  
Then, down rich fields and frosty river beaches  
We'll trample bright persimmons, while you kill  
Bronze partridge, speckled quail, and canvasback.

4

Down to the Puritan marrow of my bones  
There's something in this richness that I hate.  
I love the look, austere, immaculate,  
Of landscapes drawn in pearly monotones.  
There's something in my very blood that owns  
Bare hills, cold silver on a sky of slate,  
A thread of water, churned to milky spate  
Streaming through slanted pastures fenced with stones.



**WTLIE**

**I love those skies, thin blue or snowy gray  
Those fields sparse-planted, rendering meagre sheaves;  
That spring, briefer than apple-blossom's breath,  
Summer, so much too beautiful to stay,  
Swift autumn, like a bonfire of leaves,  
And sleepy winter, like the sleep of death.**



CASTILIAN

VELASQUEZ took a pliant knife  
And scraped his palette clean;  
He said, "I lead a dog's own life  
Painting a king and queen."

He cleaned his palette with oil rags  
And oakum from Seville wharves;  
"I am sick of painting painted lugs  
And bad ambiguous dwarves.

"The sky is silver, the clouds are pearl,  
Their locks are looped with rain.  
I will not paint Maria's girl  
For all the money in Spain."

He washed his face in water cold,  
His hands in turpentine;  
He squeezed out colour like coins of gold  
And colour like drops of wine.

Each colour lay like a little pool  
On the polished cedar wood;  
Clear and pale and ivory-cool  
Or dark as solitude.

He burnt the rags in the fireplace  
And leaned from the window high;  
He said, "I like that gentleman's face  
Who wears his cap awry."



*WYLIE*

**This is the gentleman, there he stands,  
Castilian, sombre-caped,  
With arrogant eyes, and narrow hands  
Miraculously shaped.**



\* EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY \*

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MORITURUS

IF I could have  
Two things in one:  
The peace of the grave,  
And the light of the sun;

My hands across  
My thin breast-bone,  
But aware of the moss  
Invading the stone,

Aware of the flight  
Of the golden flicker  
With his wing to the light;  
To hear him nicker

And drum with his bill  
On the rotted window;  
Snug and still  
On a gray pillow

Deep in the clay  
Where digging is hard,  
Out of the way,—  
The blue shard



**MILLAT**

Of a broken platter—  
If I might be  
Insensate matter  
With sensate me

Sitting within,  
Harking and prying,  
I might begin  
To dicker with dying.

For the body at best  
Is a bundle of aches,  
Longing for rest;  
It cries when it wakes

"Alas, 'tis light!"  
At set of sun  
"Alas, 'tis night,  
And nothing done!"

Death, however,  
Is a spongy wall,  
Is a sticky river,  
Is nothing at all.

Summon the weeper,  
Wail and sing;  
Call him Reaper,  
Angel, King;

Call him Evil  
Drunk to the lees,  
Monster, Devil,—  
He is less than these.



*MODERN POETRY*

Call him Thief,  
The Maggot in the Cheese,  
The Canker in the Leaf—  
He is less than these.

Dusk without sound,  
Where the spirit by pain  
Uncoiled, is wound  
To spring again;

The mind enmeshed  
Laid straight in repose,  
And the body refreshed  
By feeding the rose—

These are but visions;  
These would be  
The grave's derisions,  
Could the grave see.

Here is the wish  
Of one that died  
Like a beached fish  
On the ebb of the tide:

That he might wait  
Till the tide came back,  
To see if a crate,  
Or a bottle, or a black

Boot, or an oar,  
Or an orange peel  
Be washed ashore. . . .  
About his heel



MILLAY

The sand slips;  
The last he hears  
From the world's lips  
Is the sand in his ears.

What thing is little?—  
The aphis hid  
In a house of spittle?  
The hinge of the lid

Of the spider's eye  
At the spider's birth?  
"Greater am I  
By the earth's girth

"Than Mighty Death!"  
All creatures cry  
That can summon breath—  
And speak no lie.

For he is nothing;  
He is less  
Than Echo answering  
"Nothingness!"—

Less than the heat  
Of the furthest star  
To the ripening wheat;  
Less by far,

When all the lipping  
Is said and sung,  
Than the sweat dripping  
From a dog's tongue.



*MODERN POETRY*

This being so,  
And I being such,  
I would liever go  
On a cripple's crutch,

Lopped and felled:  
Liever be dependent  
On a chair propelled  
By a surly attendant

With a foul breath,  
And be spooned my food  
Than go with Death  
Where nothing good,

Not even the thrust  
Of the summer gnat,  
Consoles the dust  
For being that.

Needy, lonely,  
Stitched by pain,  
Left with only  
The drip of the rain

Out of all I had;  
The books of the wise,  
Badly read  
By other eyes,

Lewdly bawled  
At my closing ear;  
Hated, called  
A lingerer here—



**MILLAR**

**Withstanding Death  
Till Life be gone,  
I shall treasure my breath,  
I shall linger on.**

**I shall bolt my door  
With a bolt and a cable;  
I shall block my door  
With a bureau and a table;**

**With all my might  
My door shall be barred.  
I shall put up a fight,  
I shall take it hard.**

**With his hand on my mouth  
He shall drag me forth,  
Shrieking to the south  
And clutching at the north.**



\* ROBINSON JEFFERS \*

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PRACTICAL PEOPLE

PRACTICAL people, I have been told,  
 Weary of the sea for his waves go up and down  
 Endlessly to no visible purpose;  
 Tire of the tides, for the tides are tireless, the tides  
 Are well content with their own march-tune  
 And nothing accomplished is no matter to them.  
 It seems wasteful to practical people.  
 And that the nations labor and gather and dissolve  
 Into destruction; the stars sharpen  
 Their spirit of splendor, and then it dims, and the stars  
 Darken; and that the spirit of man  
 Sharpens up to maturity and cools dull  
 With age, dies, and rusts out of service;  
 And all these tidal gatherings, growth and decay,  
 Shining and darkening, are forever  
 Renewed; and the whole cycle impenitently  
 Revolves, and all the past is future:—  
 Make it a difficult world . . . for practical people.



**JEFFERS**

**SHINE, PERISHING REPUBLIC**

**W**HILE this America settles in the mould of its vulgarity  
heavily thickening to empire,  
And protest, only a bubble in the molten mass, pops and  
sighs out, and the mass hardens,

I sadly remember that the flower fades to make fruit,  
the fruit rots to make earth.  
Out of the mother; and through the spring exultances,  
ripeness and decadence; and home to the mother.

You making haste haste on decay: not blameworthy;  
life is good, be it stubbornly long or suddenly  
A mortal splendor: meteors are not needed less than  
mountains: shine, perishing republic.

But for my children, I would rather have them keep their  
distance from the thickening center; corruption  
Never has been compulsory, when the cities lie at the  
monster's feet there are left the mountains.

And boys, be in nothing so moderate as in love of man, a  
clever servant, insufferable master.  
There is the trap that catches noblest spirits, that caught  
they say—God, when he walked on earth.



NIGHT

THE ebb slips from the rock, the sunken  
Tide-rocks lift streaming shoulders  
Out of the slack, the slow west  
Sombering its torch; a ship's light  
Shows faintly, far out,  
Over the weight of the prone ocean  
On the low cloud.

Over the dark mountain, over the dark pinewood,  
Down the long dark valley along the shrunken river,  
Returns the splendor without rays, the shining of shadow,  
Peace-bringer, the matrix of all shining and quieter of shining.  
Where the shore widens on the bay she opens dark wings  
And the ocean accepts her glory. O soul worshipful of her  
You like the ocean have grave depths where she dwells always,  
And the film of waves above that takes the sun takes also  
Her, with more love. The sun-lovers have a blond favorite,  
A father of lights and noises, wars, weeping and laughter,  
Hot labor, lust and delight and the other blemishes. Quietness  
Flows from her deeper fountain; and he will die; and she is im-  
mortal.

Far off from here the slender  
Flocks of the mountain forest  
Move among stems like towers  
Of the old redwoods to the stream,  
No twig crackling; dip shy  
Wild muzzles into the mountain water  
Among the dark ferns.



JEFFERS

O passionately at peace you being secure will pardon  
The blasphemies of glowworms, the lamp in my tower, the fret-  
fulness

Of cities, the cressets of the planets, the pride of the stars.  
This August night in a rift of cloud Antares reddens,  
The great one, the ancient torch, a lord among lost children,  
The earth's orbit doubled would not girdle his greatness, one fire  
Globed, out of grasp of the mind enormous; but to you O Night  
What? Not a spark? What flicker of a spark in the faint far glimmer  
Of a lost fire dying in the desert, dim coals of a sand-pit the  
Bedouins

Wandered from at dawn . . . Ah singing prayer to what gulfs  
tempted

Suddenly are you more lost? To us the near-hand mountain  
Be a measure of height, the tide-worn cliff at the sea-gate a  
measure of continuance.

The tide, moving the night's  
Vastness with lonely voices,  
Turns, the deep dark-shining  
Pacific leans on the land,  
Feeling his cold strength  
To the outmost margins: you Night will resume  
The stars in your time.

O passionately at peace when will that tide draw shoreward?  
Truly the spouting fountains of light, Antares, Arcturus,  
Tire of their flow, they sing one song but they think silence.  
The striding winter giant Orion shines, and dreams darkness.  
And life, the flicker of men and moths and the wolf on the hill,  
Though furious for continuance, passionately feeding, passion-  
ately

Remaking itself upon its mates, remembers deep inward



The calm mother, the quietness of the womb and the egg,  
The primal and the latter silences: dear Night it is memory  
Prophecies, prophecy that remembers, the charm of the dark.  
And I and my people, we are willing to love the four-score years  
Heartily; but as a sailor loves the sea, when the helm is for harbor.

Have men's minds changed,  
Or the rock hidden in the deep of the waters of the soul  
Broken the surface? A few centuries  
Gone by, was none dared not to people  
The darkness beyond the stars with harps and habitations.  
But now, dear is the truth. Life is grown sweeter and lonelier,  
And death is no evil.



JEFFERS

THE BEAKS OF EAGLES

**A**N EAGLE'S nest on the head of an old redwood on one of the  
precipice-footed ridges  
Above Ventana Creek, that jagged country which nothing but a  
falling meteor will ever plow; no horseman  
Will ever ride there, no hunter cross this ridge but the winged  
ones, no one will steal the eggs from this fortress.  
The she-eagle is old, her mate was shot long ago, she is now mated  
with a son of hers.  
When lightning blasted her nest she built it again on the same  
tree, in the splinters of the thunderbolt.  
The she-eagle is older than I; she was here when the fires of  
eighty-five raged on these ridges,  
She was lately fledged and dared not hunt ahead of them but ate  
scorched meat. The world has changed in her time;  
Humanity has multiplied, but not here; men's hopes and thoughts  
and customs have changed, their powers are enlarged,  
Their powers and their follies have become fantastic,  
The unstable animal never has been changed so rapidly. The  
motor and the plane and the great war have gone over him,  
And Lenin has lived and Jehovah died: while the mother-eagle  
Hunts her same hills, crying the same beautiful and lonely cry and  
is never tired; dreams the same dreams,  
And hears at night the rock-slides rattle and thunder in the throats  
of these living mountains.

It is good for man  
To try all changes, progress and corruption, powers, peace and  
anguish, not to go down the dinosaur's way  
Until all his capacities have been explored: and it is good for him  
To know that his needs and nature are no more changed in fact  
in ten thousand years than the beaks of eagles.



\* J A M E S J O Y C E \*

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I HEAR AN ARMY CHARGING UPON THE LAND

I HEAR an army charging upon the land,  
And the thunder of horses plunging, foam about their  
knees:

Arrogant, in black armour, behind them stand,  
Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the  
charioteers.

They cry unto the night their battle-name:  
I moan in sleep when I hear afar their whirling  
laughter.

They cleave the gloom of dreams a blinding flame,  
Clanging, clanging upon the heart as upon an anvil.

They come shaking in triumph their long, green hair:  
They come out of the sea and run shouting by the  
shore.

My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair?  
My love, my love, my love, why have you left me  
alone?



From NOT SO DEEP AS A WELL

1. FIGHTING WORDS

SAY my love is easy had,  
Say I'm bitten raw with pride,  
Say I am too often sad—  
Still behold me at your side.

Say I'm neither brave nor young,  
Say I woo and coddle care,  
Say the devil touched my tongue—  
Still you have my heart to wear.

But say my verses do not scan,  
And I get me another man!

2. BOHEMIA

Authors and actors and artists and such  
Never know nothing, and never know much.  
Sculptors and singers and those of their kidney  
Tell their affairs from Seattle to Sydney.  
Playwrights and poets and such horses' necks  
Start off from anywhere, end up at sex.  
Diarists, critics and similar roe  
Never say nothing, and never say no.  
People who do things exceed my endurance;  
God, for a man that solicits insurance!



\* M A R I A N N E M O O R E \*

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THE MONKEYS

WINKED too much and were afraid of snakes. The zebras,  
supreme in  
their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-coloured skin  
and strictly practical appendages  
were there, the small cats; and the parrakeet—  
trivial and humdrum on examination, destroying  
bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent  
than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament,  
speech, and precise manner of what one might  
call the minor acquaintances twenty  
years back; but I shall not forget him—that  
Gilgamesh among  
the hairy carnivora—that cat with the

wedge-shaped, slate-gray marks on its forelegs and the resolute  
tail,  
astringently remarking, 'They have imposed on us with their  
pale  
half-fledge protestations, trembling about  
in inarticulate frenzy, saying  
it is not for us to understand art; finding it  
all so difficult, examining the thing



MOORE

as if it were inconceivably arcanic, as symmetrically frigid as if it had been carved out of chrysophrase or marble—strict with tension, malignant in its power over us and deeper than the sea when it proffers flattery in exchange for hemp, rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur.'



\* D . H . L A W R E N C E \*

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THE SEA

YOU, you are all unloving, loveless, you;  
Restless and lonely, shaken by your own moods,  
You are celibate and single, scorning a comrade even,  
Threshing your own passions with no woman for the  
threshing-floor,  
Finishing your dreams for your own sake only,  
Playing your great game around the world, alone,  
Without playmate, or helpmate, having no one to cherish,  
No one to comfort, and refusing any comforter.

Not like the earth, the spouse all full of increase  
Moiled over with the rearing of her many-mouthed  
young;  
You are single, you are fruitless, phosphorescent, cold  
and callous,  
Naked of worship, of love or of adornment,  
Scorning the panacea even of labour,  
Sworn to a high and splendid purposelessness  
Of brooding and delighting in the secret of life's goings,  
Sea, only you are free, sophisticated.

You who toil not, you who spin not,  
Surely but for you and your like, toiling  
Were not worth while, nor spinning worth the effort!  
You who take the moon as in a sieve, and sift



Her flake by flake and spread her meaning out;  
You who roll the stars like jewels in your palm,  
So that they seem to utter themselves aloud;  
You who steep from out the days their colour,  
Reveal the universal tint that dyes  
Their web; who shadow the sun's great gestures and  
expressions  
So that he seems a stranger in his passing;  
Who voice the dumb night fittingly;  
Sea, you shadow of all things, now mock us to death  
with your shadowing.



THE ELEPHANT IS SLOW TO MATE

THE elephant, the huge old beast  
is slow to mate;  
he finds a female, they show no haste  
they wait

for the sympathy in their vast shy hearts  
slowly, slowly to rouse  
as they loiter along the river-beds  
and drink and browse

and dash in panic through the brake  
of forest with the herd,  
and sleep in massive silence, and wake  
together, without a word.

So slowly the great hot elephant hearts  
grow full of desire,  
and the great beasts mate in secret at last,  
hiding their fire.

Oldest they are and the wisest of beasts  
so they know at last  
how to wait for the loneliest of feasts  
for the full repast.

They do not snatch, they do not tear;  
their massive blood  
moves as the moon-tides, near, more near  
till they touch in flood.



SNAKE

A SNAKE came to my water-trough  
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,  
To drink there.

In a deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree  
I came down the steps with my pitcher  
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the  
trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom  
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over  
the edge of the stone trough  
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,  
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,  
He sipped with his straight mouth,  
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,  
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,  
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,  
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,  
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a  
moment,  
And stooped and drank a little more,  
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the  
earth  
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.



## MODERN POETRY

The voice of my education said to me  
He must be killed,  
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are  
venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man  
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,  
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at  
my water-trough

And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,  
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?  
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?  
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?  
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:  
*If you were not afraid, you would kill him!*  
And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,  
But even so, honoured still more  
That he should seek my hospitality  
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough  
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,  
And flickered his tongue like a forked light on the air, so black,  
Seeming to lick his lips,  
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,  
And slowly turned his head,  
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,  
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round  
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.



*LAWRENCE*

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,  
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered  
farther,  
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into  
that horrid black hole,  
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself  
after,  
Overcame me now his back was turned.  
I looked round, I put down my pitcher,  
I picked up a clumsy log  
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.  
I think it did not hit him,  
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in  
undignified haste,  
Writhed like lightning, and was gone  
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,  
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.  
And immediately I regretted it.  
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!  
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.  
And I thought of the albatross,  
And I wished he would come back, my snake.  
For he seemed to me again like a king,  
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,  
Now due to be crowned again.  
And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords  
Of life.  
And I have something to expiate;  
A pettiness.

*Taormina.*



From THE SHIP OF DEATH

I SING of autumn and the falling fruit  
and the long journey toward oblivion.

The apples falling like great drops of dew  
to bruise themselves and exit from themselves.

Have you built your ship of death, oh, have you?

Build then your ship of death, for you will need it!

\*

And if tonight my soul may find her peace  
in sleep, and sink in good oblivion,  
and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower  
then I have been dipped again in God, and new-created.

And if, as weeks go round, in the dark of the moon  
my spirit darkens and goes out, and soft strange gloom  
pervades my movements and my thoughts and words  
then I shall know that I am walking still  
with God, we are close together now the moon's in shadow.

And if, as autumn deepens and darkens  
I feel the pain of falling leaves, and stems that break in  
storms  
and trouble and dissolution and distress  
and then the softness of deep shadows folding, folding  
around my soul and spirit, around my lips  
so sweet, like a swoon, or more like the drowse of a low,  
sad song



singing darker than the nightingale, on, on to the sol  
and the silence of short days, the silence of the year,  
shadow,

then I shall know that my life is moving still  
with the dark earth, and drenched  
with the deep oblivion of earth's lapse and renewal.

And if, in the changing phases of man's life  
I fall in sickness and in misery  
my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead  
and strength is gone, and my life  
is only the leavings of a life:

and still, among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion, an  
snatches of renewal  
odd, wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new  
strange flowers  
such as my life has not brought forth before, new bl  
soms of me—

then I must know that still  
I am in the hands of the unknown God,  
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion  
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man.  
Drift on, drift on, my soul, toward the most pure  
most dark oblivion.

And at the penultimate porches, the dark-red mantl  
of the body's memories slips and is absorbed  
into the shell-like, womb-like convoluted shadow.

And round the great final bend of unbroken dark  
the skirt of the spirit's experience has melted away  
the oars have gone from the boat, and the little dish  
gone, gone, and the boat dissolves like pearl



MODERN POETRY

as the soul at last slips perfect into the goal, the core  
of sheer oblivion and of utter peace.  
the womb of silence in the living night.

Ah peace, ah lovely peace, most lovely lapsing  
of this my soul into the plasm of peace.

Oh lovely last, last lapse of death, into pure oblivion  
at the end of the longest journey  
peace. complete peace!  
But can it be that also it is procreation?

\*

Ah, if you want to live in peace on the face of the earth  
Then build your ship of death, in readiness  
For the longest journey, over the last of seas.



OLD COUNTRYSIDE

B EYOND the hour we counted rain that fell  
On the slant shutter, all has come to proof.  
The summer thunder, like a wooden bell,  
Rang in the storm above the mansard roof,

And mirrors cast the cloudy day along  
The attic floor; wind made the clapboards creak.  
You braced against the wall to make it strong,  
A shell against your cheek.

Long since, we pulled brown oak-leaves to the ground  
In a winter of dry trees; we heard the cock  
Shout its unplaceable cry, the axe's sound  
Delay a moment after the axe's stroke.

Far back, we saw, in the stillest of the year,  
The scrawled vine shudder, and the rose-branch show  
Red to the thorns, and, sharp as sight can bear,  
The thin hound's body arched against the snow.



BAROQUE COMMENT

FROM loud sound and still chance;  
From mindless earth, wet with a dead million leaves;  
From the forest, the empty desert, the tearing beasts,  
The kelp-disordered beaches;  
Coincident with the lie, anger, lust, oppression and death  
in many forms:

Ornamental structures, continents apart, separated by seas;  
Fitted marble, swung bells; fruit in garlands as well as on  
the branch;  
The flower at last in bronze, stretched backward, or curled  
within;  
Stone in various shapes: beyond the pyramid, the contrived  
arch and the buttress;  
The named constellations;  
Crown and vesture; palm and laurel chosen as noble and  
enduring;  
Speech proud in sound; death considered sacrifice;  
Mask, weapon, urn; the ordered strings;  
Fountains; foreheads under weather-bleached hair;  
The wreath, the oar, the tool,  
The prow.  
The turned eyes and the opened mouth of love.



WAR EXPERIENCE

D E G R E E S of groping thought have taught me to conclude  
That when a man began in youth to learn truth crude  
From life in the demented strife and ghastly glooms  
Of soul-conscripting war, mechanic and volcanic,—  
Not much remains, twelve winters later, of the hater  
Of purgatorial pains. And somewhat softly booms  
A Somme bombardment: almost unbelieved-in looms  
The day-break sentry staring over Kiel Trench crater.



AT THE GRAVE OF HENRY VAUGHAN

**A**BOVE the voiceful windings of a river  
An old green slab of simply graven stone  
Shuns notice, overshadowed by a yew.  
Here Vaughan lies dead, whose name flows on for ever  
Through pastures of the spirit washed with dew  
And starlit with eternities unknown.

Here sleeps the Silurist; the loved physician;  
The face that left no portraiture behind;  
The skull that housed white angels and had vision  
Of day-break through the gateways of the mind.  
Here faith and mercy, wisdom and humility  
(Whose influence shall prevail for evermore)  
Shine. And the lowly grave tells Heaven's tranquility.  
And here stand I, a suppliant at the door.



I AM OF IRELAND

I AM of Ireland,  
And the Holy Land of Ireland,  
And time runs on," cried she.  
"Come out of charity,  
Come dance with me in Ireland."

One man, one man alone  
In that outlandish gear,  
One solitary man  
Of all that rambled there  
Had turned his stately head.  
"That is a long way off,  
And time runs on," he said,  
"And the nigh grows rough."

"I am of Ireland,  
And the Holy Land of Ireland,  
And time runs on," cried she,  
"Come out of charity  
And dance with me in Ireland."

"The fiddlers are all thumbs,  
Or the fiddle-strings accursed,  
The drums and the kettle-drums  
And the trumpets all are burst.



MODERN POETRY

And the trombone," cried he,  
"The trumpet and trombone,"  
And cocked a malicious eye,  
"But time runs on, runs on."

*"I am of Ireland,  
And the Holy Land of Ireland,  
And time runs on," cried she.  
"Come out of charity  
And dance with me in Ireland."*



## THE COLD HEAVEN

SUDDENLY I saw the cold and rook-delighting Heaven  
That seemed as though ice burned and was but the m  
ice,

And thereupon imagination and heart were driven  
So wild that every casual thought of that and this  
Vanished, and left but memories, that should be out o  
season

With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago;  
And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason,  
Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro,  
Riddled with light. Ah! when the ghost begins to  
quicken,

Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent  
Out naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricke  
By the injustice of the skies for punishment?



SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

1

THAT is no country for old men. The young  
In one another's arms; birds in the trees,  
—Those dying generations—at their song;  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.  
Caught in that sensual music all neglect  
Monuments of unageing intellect.

2

An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence;  
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come  
To the holy city of Byzantium.

3

O sages standing in God's holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing masters of my soul.  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity.



Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.



THE SECOND COMING

TURNING and turning in the widening gyre  
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
 Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
 The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
 When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
 Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
 Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
 The darkness drops again; but now I know  
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?



## AN ACRE OF GRASS

PICTURE and book remain,  
An acre of green grass  
For air and exercise,  
Now strength of body goes;  
Midnight, an old house  
Where nothing stirs but a mouse.

My temptation is quiet.  
Here at life's end  
Neither loose imagination,  
Nor the mill of the mind  
Consuming its rag and bone,  
Can make the truth known.

Grant me an old man's frenzy,  
Myself must I remake  
Till I am Timon and Lear  
Or that William Blake  
Who beat upon the wall  
Till Truth obeyed his call;

A mind Michael Angelo knew  
That can pierce the clouds,  
Or inspired by frenzy  
Shake the dead in their shrouds;  
Forgotten else by mankind,  
An old man's eagle mind.







## \* PART TWO \*

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*WHO can make a poem of the depths of weariness  
bringing meaning to those never in the depths?  
Those who order what they please  
when they choose to have it—  
can they understand the many down under  
who come home to their wives and children at night  
and night after night as yet too brave and unbroken  
to say, "I ache all over"?  
How can a poem deal with production cost  
and leave out definite misery paying  
a permanent price in shattered health and early old age?  
When will the efficiency engineers and the poets  
get together on a program?  
Will that be a cold day? will that be a special hour?  
Will somebody be cocoo then?  
And if so, who?  
And what does the Christian Bible say?  
And the Mohammedan Koran and Confucius and the  
Shintoists  
and the Encyclicals of the Popes?  
Will somebody be cocoo then?  
And if so, who??*

CARL SANDB







\* A N O N Y M O U S \*

---

A GROUP OF NEGRO SONGS

1

I KNOW moon-rise, I know star-rise,  
I lay dis body down.  
I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight  
To lay dis body down.  
I walk in de graveyard, I walk through the graveyard  
To lay dis body down.  
I lie in de grave an' stretch out my arms;  
Lay dis body down.  
I go to de judgement in de evenin' of de day  
When I lay dis body down  
An' my soul and your soul will meet in de day  
When I lay dis body down.

2

Joshua fit de battle ob Jerico,  
Jerico, Jerico,—  
Joshua fit de battle ob Jerico  
An' de walls come tumblin' down

You may talk about yo' king ob Gideon,  
You may talk about yo' man ob Saul:  
Dere's none like good ole Josh-ua  
At de battle ob Jerico.



## MODERN POETRY

Up to de walls ob Jerico  
He marched with spear in han';  
"Go blow dem ram horns," Joshua cried,  
"Kase de battle am in my han'."

Den de lam' ram sheep horns begin to blow,  
Trumpets begin to soun';  
Josh-u-a commanded de chillun to shout  
An' de walls come tumblin' down;

Dat mornin'  
Joshua fit de battle ob Jerico,  
Jerico, Jerico;  
Joshua fit de battle ob Jerico  
An' de walls come tumblin' down.

### 3

Dark was de night an' col' was de groun'  
In which de Lawd was laid,  
Sweat like blood run down in drops  
An' in agony he prayed.

### 4

Yes, de book of Revelations will be brought forth dat  
day,

An' every leaf unfolded, de book of de seven seals.

An' I went down to Egypt, I camped upon de groun'  
At de soundin' of de trumpet de Holy Ghost came down.

And when de seals were opened, de voice said, "Come  
an' see,"

I went an' stood a-looking to see de mystery.



ANONYMOUS

De red horse came a-gallopin', and de black horse he  
came too,  
An' de pale horse he came down de road, an' stole my  
father away.

An' den I see ole Satan, an' dey bound him wid a chain,  
An' dey put him in de fi-ar an' I see de smoke arise.

Dey bound him in de fi-ar, where he wanted to take my  
soul,  
Ole Satan gnashed his teeth and howled, he missed po'  
sinner man's soul.

Den I see de dead arisin', and stan' before de Lamb  
And de wicked call on de mountains to hide dem f'om  
His face,

An' den I see de Christians, standin' on God's right han  
A-shoutin' "Hallelujah!" singing praises to de Lord.

5

When de golden trumpets sound  
Where will yo' soul be found?  
Standin' aroun', standin' around  
When de golden trumpets sound.

When de golden trumpets sound  
Where will my soul be found?  
With de crowned, with de crowned  
When de golden trumpets sound.

6

I wrastled wid Satan, I wrastled wid sin,  
Stepped over hell, an' come back ag'in.



MODERN POETRY

Isaiah mounted on de wheel of time,  
Spoke to God A-mighty way down de line.

O hear dat lumberin' thunder  
A-roll f'om door to door,  
A-callin' de people home to God,  
Dey'll git home bime-by.

O see dat forkéd lightnin'  
A-jump f'om cloud to cloud,  
A-pickin' up God's chillun,  
Dey'll git home bime-by.

7

Sometimes I feel like an eagle in de air  
Some-a dese mornin's bright an' fair  
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load;  
Goin' to spread my wings an' cleave de air.  
You may bury me in de east,  
You may bury me in de west,  
But I'll hear de trumpet sound  
In-a dat mornin'.

8

John Henry tol' his Cap'n  
That a man was a natch'al man:  
And before he'd let that steam drill beat him down  
He'd fall dead wid his hammer in his han'  
He'd fall dead wid his hammer in his han'.

John Henry says to his Cap'n  
"Send me a twelve-poun' hammer aroun',  
A twelve-poun' wid a four-foot handle  
And I beat yo' steam drill down  
And I beat yo' steam drill down."



## *HANDY*

John Henry says to his shaker  
"Look hear, man, why don't you sing?  
I'm throwin' twelve-poun' from my hips on down,  
Jes' you lis'en to de col' steel ring,  
Jes' you lis'en to de col' steel ring."

John Henry went down on de railroad  
Wid a twelve-poun' hammer by his side,  
He walked down de track but he never come back,  
'Cause he laid down his hammer an' he died,  
'Cause he laid down his hammer an' he died.

John Henry had a good woman,  
Her name was Polly Ann.  
On de day John Henry he dropped dead  
Polly Ann hammered steel like a man,  
Polly Ann hammered steel like a man.

## 9

### *W. C. Handy*

I've put some  
ASHES in my sweet papa's bed,  
So that he can't slip out—  
HOODOO in his bread,  
Goopher-dust all about—I'll fix him!  
CON-JU-RA-TION  
Is in his socks and shoes;  
Tomorrow he will have those  
Mean Sundown Blues!

## 10

### *W. C. Handy*

Ah hate to see de evenin' sun go down,  
Hate to see de evenin' sun go down,—



## MODERN POETRY

'Cause my baby,—he done lef' dis town  
Feelin' tomorrow lak Ah feel today,  
Feel tomorrow lak Ah feel today,  
Ah'll pack my trunk, make mah get away.  
St. Louis woman wid her diamon' rings  
Pulls dat man 'roun' by her apron strings;  
'Twa'nt for powder and for store-bought hair  
De man I love would not gone nowhere.

You ought to see dat stove-pipe brown of mine  
Lak he own de Diamon' Joseph line;  
He'd make a cross-eyed 'oman go stone blind  
Blacker than midnight, teeth lak flags of truce,—  
Blackest man in de whole St. Louis  
(Blacker de berry—sweeter is de juice)  
About a crap game he knows a pow'ful lot  
But when work-time comes he's on de dot;  
Gwine to ask him for a cold ten spot:  
What it takes to git it, he's cert'nly got.

Got de St. Louis Blues jes' as blue as Ah can be  
Dat man got a heart lak a rock cast in de sea  
Or else he wouldn't have gone so far from me,  
Dog-gone it!



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\* E D W I N M A R K H A M \*

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THE MAN WITH THE HOE

*God made man in his own image  
in the image of God he made him.*

GENESIS

BOWED by the weight of centuries he leans  
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,  
The emptiness of ages in his face,  
And on his back the burden of the world.  
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,  
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,  
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?  
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?  
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?  
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave  
To have dominion over sea and land?  
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;  
To feel the passion of Eternity?  
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns  
And markt their ways upon the ancient deep?  
Down all the caverns of Hell to their last gulf  
There is no shape more terrible than this—  
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—  
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—  
More packt with danger to the universe.



## MODERN POETRY

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!  
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him  
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?  
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,  
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?  
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;  
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;  
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,  
Plundered, profaned and disinherited,  
Cries protest to the Powers that made the world,  
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,  
Is this the handiwork you give to God,  
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quencht?  
How will you ever straighten up this shape;  
Touch it again with immortality;  
Give back the upward looking and the light;  
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;  
Make right the immemorial infamies,  
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,  
How will the future reckon with this Man?  
How answer his brute question in that hour  
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores?  
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—  
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—  
When this dumb Terror shall rise to judge the world,  
After the silence of the centuries?



THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE

I. COMRADE JESUS

THANKS to Saint Matthew, who had been  
At mass meetings in Palestine,  
We know whose side was spoken for  
When Comrade Jesus had the floor.

“Where sore they toil and hard they lie,  
Among the great unwashed, dwell I.  
The tramp, the convict, I am he;  
Cold-shoulder him, cold-shoulder me.”

By Dives' door, with thoughtful eye,  
He did tomorrow prophesy.  
“The kingdom's gate is low and small;  
The rich can scarce wedge through at all.”

“A dangerous man,” said Caiaphas,  
“An ignorant demagogue, alas,  
Friend of low women, it is he  
Slanders the upright Pharisee.”

For law and order, it was plain  
For holy church, he must be slain.  
The troops were there to awe the crowd  
And “violence” was not allowed.



## MODERN POETRY

The clumsy force with force to foil  
His strong, clean hands he would not soil.  
He saw their childishness quite plain  
Between the lightnings of his pain.

Between the twilights of his end  
He made his fellow-felon friend;  
With swollen tongue and blinding eyes  
Invited him to paradise.

### 2. QUATRAIN

The golf links lie so near the mill  
That almost every day  
The laboring children can look out  
And see the men at play.



From SPOON RIVER

1. MRS. WILLIAMS

I WAS the milliner  
I Talked about, lied about,  
Mother of Dora,  
Whose strange disappearance  
Was charged to her rearing.  
My eye quick to beauty  
Saw much beside ribbons  
And buckles and feathers  
And leghorns and felts,  
To set off sweet faces,  
And dark hair and gold.  
One thing I will tell you  
And one I will ask:  
The stealers of husbands  
Wear powder and trinkets,  
And fashionable hats.  
Wives, wear them yourselves.  
Hats may make divorces—  
They also prevent them.  
Well now, let me ask you:  
If all of the children, born here in Spoon River  
Had been reared by the County, somewhere on a farm;  
And the fathers and mothers had been given their freedom



## MODERN POETRY

To live and enjoy, change mates if they wished,  
Do you think that Spoon River  
Had been any the worse?

### 2. CHANDLER NICHOLAS

Every morning bathing myself and shaving myself,  
And dressing myself.  
But no one in my life to take delight  
In my fastidious appearance.  
Every day walking, and deep breathing  
For the sake of my health.  
But to what use vitality?  
Every day improving my mind  
With meditation and reading,  
But no one with whom to exchange wisdoms.  
No agora, no clearing house  
For ideas, Spoon River.  
Seeking, but never sought;  
Ripe, companionable, useful, but useless.  
Chained here in Spoon River,  
My liver scorned by the vultures,  
And self-devoured!

### 3. HOWARD LAMSON

Ice cannot shiver in the cold,  
Nor stones shrink from the lapping flame.  
Eyes that are sealed no more have tears;  
Ears that are stopped hear nothing ill;  
Hearts turned to silt are strange to pain;  
Tongues that are dumb report no loss;  
Hands stiffened, well may idle be;  
No sigh is from a breathless breast.  
Beauty may fade, but closed eyes see not;



## **MASTERS**

Sorrow may wail, but stopped ears hear not;  
Nothing to say is for dumb tongues.  
The rolling earth rolls on and on  
With trees and stones and winding streams—  
My dream is what the hillside dreams!



\* EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON \*

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MINIVER CHEEVY

MINIVER CHEEVY, child of scorn  
Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;  
He wept that he was ever born,  
And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old  
When swords were bright and steeds were  
prancing;  
The vision of a warrior bold  
Would set him dancing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,  
And dreamed, and rested from his labors;  
He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,  
And Priam's neighbors.

Miniver mourned the ripe renown  
That made so many a name so fragrant;  
He mourned Romance, now on the town,  
And Art, a vagrant.

Miniver loved the Medici,  
Albeit he had never seen one;  
He would have sinned incessantly  
Could he have been one.

Miniver cursed the commonplace  
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;  
He missed the medieval grace  
Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,  
But sore annoyed was he without it;  
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought  
And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,  
Scratched his head and kept on thinking;  
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,  
And kept on drinking.



GEORGE CRABBE

**G**IVE him the darkest inch your shelf allows,  
Hide him in lonely garrets, if you will,—  
But his hard, human pulse is throbbing still  
With the sure strength that fearless truth endows.  
In spite of all fine science disavows,  
Of his plain excellence and stubborn skill  
There yet remains what fashion cannot kill,  
Though years have thinned the laurel from his brows

Whether or not we read him, we can feel  
From time to time the vigor of his name  
Against us like a finger for the shame  
And emptiness of what our souls reveal  
In books that are as altars where we kneel  
To consecrate the flicker, not the flame.

TWO TRAMPS IN MUD TIME

OUT of the mud two strangers came  
And caught me splitting wood in the yard.  
And one of them put me off my aim  
By hailing cheerily "Hit them hard!"  
I knew pretty well why he dropped behind  
And let the other go on a way.  
I knew pretty well what he had in mind:  
He wanted to take my job for pay.

Good blocks of beech it was I split,  
As large around as the chopping block;  
And every piece I squarely hit  
Fell splinterless as a cloven rock.  
The blows that a life of self-control  
Spares to strike for the common good  
That day, giving a loose to my soul,  
I spent on the unimportant wood.

The sun was warm but the wind was chill.  
You know how it is with an April day  
When the sun is out and the wind is still,  
You're one month on in the middle of May.  
But if you so much as dare to speak,  
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,  
A wind comes off a frozen peak,  
And you're two months back in the middle of March.



## MODERN POETRY

A bluebird comes tenderly up to alight  
And fronts the wind to unruffle a plume,  
His song so pitched as not to excite  
A single flower as yet to bloom.  
It is snowing a flake: and he half knew  
Winter was only playing possum.  
Except in color he isn't blue,  
But he wouldn't advise a thing to blossom.

The water for which we may have to look  
In summertime with a witching-wand,  
In every wheelrut's now a brook,  
In every print of a hoof a pond.  
Be glad of water, but don't forget  
The lurking frost in the earth beneath  
That will steal forth after the sun is set  
And show on the water its crystal teeth.

The time when most I loved my task  
These two must make me love it more  
By coming with what they came to ask.  
You'd think I never had felt before  
The weight of an ax-head poised aloft,  
The grip on earth of outspread feet,  
The life of muscles rocking soft  
And smooth and moist in vernal heat.

Out of the woods two hulking tramps  
(From sleeping God knows where last night,  
But not long since in the lumber camps).  
They thought all chopping was theirs of right.  
Men of the woods and lumberjacks,  
They judged me by their appropriate tool.

*FROST*

Except as a fellow handled an ax,  
They had no way of knowing a fool.

Nothing on either side was said.  
They knew they had but to stay their stay  
And all their logic would fill my head:  
As that I had no right to play  
With what was another man's work for gain.  
My right might be love but theirs was need.  
And where the two exist in twain  
Theirs was the better right—agreed.

But yield who will to their separation,  
My object in living is to unite  
My avocation and my vocation  
As my two eyes make one in sight.  
Only where love and need are one,  
And the work is play for mortal stakes,  
Is the deed ever really done  
For Heaven and the future's sakes.



\* VACHEL LINDSAY \*

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SIMON LEGREE—A NEGRO SERMON

*(To be read in your own variety of Negro dialect)*

LEGREE'S big house was white and green,  
 L His cotton fields were the best to be seen.  
 He had strong horses and opulent cattle,  
 And bloodhounds bold, with chains that would rattle.  
 His garret was full of curious things:  
 Books of magic, bags of gold,  
 And rabbits' feet on long twine strings.  
 But he went down to the Devil.

Legree he sported a brass-buttoned coat,  
 A snake-skin necktie, a blood-red shirt,  
 Legree he had a beard like a goat,  
 And a thick hairy neck, and eyes like dirt.  
 His puffed-out cheeks were fish-belly white,  
 He had great long teeth, and an appetite.  
 He ate raw meat, 'most every meal,  
 And rolled his eyes till the cat would squeal.

His fist was an enormous size  
 To mash poor niggers that told him lies:  
 He was surely a witch-man in disguise.  
 But he went down to the Devil.



He wore hip-boots and would wade all day,  
 To capture his slaves that had fled away.  
 But he went down to the Devil.

He beat poor Uncle Tom to death  
 Who prayed for Legree with his last breath.  
 Then Uncle Tom to Eva flew,  
 To the high sanctoriums bright and new;  
 And Simon Legree stared up beneath,  
 And cracked his heels, and ground his teeth:  
 And went down to the Devil.

He crossed the yard in the storm and gloom;  
 He went into his grand front room.  
 He said, "I killed him, and I don't care."  
 He kicked a hound, he gave a swear;  
 He tightened his belt, he took a lamp,  
 Went down cellar to the webs and damp.  
 There in the middle of the mouldy floor  
 He heaved up a slab, he found a door—  
 And went down to the Devil.

His lamp blew out, but his eyes burned bright.  
 Simon Legree stepped down all night—  
 Down, down to the Devil.  
 Simon Legree he reached the place,  
 He saw one half of the human race,  
 He saw the Devil on a wide green throne,  
 Gnawing the meat from a big ham-bone,  
 And he said to Mister Devil:

"I see that you have much to eat—  
 A red ham-bone is surely sweet.  
 I see that you have lion's feet;



I see your frame is fat and fine,  
I see you drink your poison wine—  
Blood and burning turpentine.”

And the Devil said to Simon Legree:

“I like your style, so wicked and free.  
Come sit and share my throne with me,  
And let us bark and revel.”

And there they sit and gnash their teeth,  
And each one wears a hop-vine wreath.  
They are matching pennies and shooting craps,  
They are playing poker and taking naps.  
And old Legree is fat and fine:  
He eats the fire, he drinks the wine—  
Blood and burning turpentine—

Down, down with the Devil:

Down, down with the Devil;

Down, down with the Devil.

## THE LEADEN-EYED

LET not young souls be smothered out before  
They do quaint deeds and fully flaunt their pride.  
It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,  
Its poor are ox-like, limp and leaden-eyed.

Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly,  
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap,  
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve,  
Not that they die but that they die like sheep.



# ON THE BUILDING OF SPRINGFIELD

LET not our town be large, remembering  
 That little Athens was the Muses' home,  
 That Oxford rules the heart of London still,  
 That Florence gave the Renaissance to Rome.

Record it for the grandson of your son—  
 A city is not builded in a day:  
 Our little town cannot complete her soul  
 Till countless generations pass away.

Now let each child be joined as to a church  
 To her perpetual hopes, each man ordained:  
 Let every street be made a reverent aisle  
 Where Music grows and Beauty is unchained.

Let Science and Machinery and Trade  
 Be slaves of her, and make her all in all,  
 Building against our blatant, restless time  
 An unseen, skilful, medieval wall.

Let every citizen be rich toward God.  
 Let Christ the beggar, teach divinity.  
 Let no man rule who holds his money dear.  
 Let this, our city, be our luxury.

We should build parks that students from afar  
 Would choose to starve in, rather than go home,  
 Fair little squares, with Phidian ornament,  
 Food for the spirit, milk and honeycomb.



Songs shall be sung by us in that good day,  
Songs we have written, blood within the rhyme  
Beating, as when Old England still was glad,—  
The purple, rich Elizabethan time.

★

Say, is my prophecy too fair and far?  
I only know, unless her faith be high,  
The soul of this, our Nineveh, is doomed,  
Our little Babylon will surely die.

Some city on the breast of Illinois  
No wiser and no better at the start  
By faith shall rise redeemed, by faith shall rise  
Bearing the western glory in her heart.

The genius of the Maple, Elm and Oak,  
The secret hidden in each grain of corn,  
The glory that the prairie angels sing  
At night when sons of Life and Love are born,

Born but to struggle, squalid and alone,  
Broken and wandering in their early years.  
When will they make our dusty streets their goal,  
Within our attics hide their sacred tears?

When will they start our vulgar blood athrill  
With living language, words that set us free?  
When will they make a path of beauty clear  
Between our riches and our liberty?

We must have many Lincoln-hearted men.  
A city is not builded in a day.  
And they must do their work, and come and go,  
While countless generations pass away.



## ABRAHAM LINCOLN WALKS AT MIDNIGHT

*(In Springfield, Illinois)*

IT is portentous, and a thing of state  
 That here at midnight, in our little town  
 A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,  
 Near the old court-house pacing up and down,

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards  
 He lingers where his children used to play,  
 Or through the market, on the well-worn stones  
 He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,  
 A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl  
 Make him the quaint great figure that men love,  
 The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.  
 He is among us:—as in times before!  
 And we who toss and lie awake for long  
 Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks on men and kings.  
 Yes, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?  
 Too many peasants fight, they know not why,  
 Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.  
 He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.  
 He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now  
 The bitterness, the folly and the pain.



*LINDSAY*

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn  
Shall come;—the shining hope of Europe free:  
The league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,  
Bringing long peace to Cornland, Alp and Sea.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,  
That all his hours of travail here for men  
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace  
That he may sleep upon his hill again?



FACTORY WINDOWS ARE ALWAYS BROKEN

FACTORY windows are always broken.  
Somebody's always throwing bricks,  
Somebody's always heaving cinders,  
Playing ugly Yahoo tricks.

Factory windows are always broken.  
Other windows are let alone.  
No one throws through the chapel-window  
The bitter, snarling, derisive stone.

Factory windows are always broken.  
Something or other is going wrong.  
Something is rotten—I think, in Denmark.  
End of the factory-window song.

JESSE JAMES

JESSE JAMES was a two-gun man,  
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)

Strong-arm chief of an outlaw clan.  
(*From Kansas to Illinois!*)

He twirled an old Colt forty-five,  
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)

They never took Jesse James alive.  
(*Roll on, Missouri, roll!*)

Jesse James was King of the Wes';  
(*Cataracks in the Missouri!*)

He'd a di'mon' heart in his lef' breas';  
(*Brown Missouri rolls!*)

He'd a fire in his heart no hurt could stifle;  
(*Thunder, Missouri!*)

Lion eyes an' a Winchester rifle.  
(*Missouri, roll down!*)

Jesse James rode a pinto hawse;  
Come at night to a water-cawse;  
Tetched with the rowel that pinto's flank;  
She sprung the torrent from bank to bank.

Jesse rode through a sleepin' town;  
Looked the moonlit street both up an' down;  
Crack-crack-crack, the street ran flames  
An' a great voice cried, "I'm Jesse James!"



Hawse an' afoot they're after Jess!

*(Roll on, Missouri!)*

Spurrin' an' spurrin'—but he's gone Wes'.

*(Brown Missouri rolls!)*

He was ten foot tall when he stood in his boots;

*(Lightnin' light the Missouri!)*

More'n a match fer sich galoots.

*(Roll, Missouri, roll!)*

Jesse James rode outa the sage;

Roun' the rocks come the swayin' stage;

Straddlin' the road a giant stan's

An' a great voice bellers, "Throw up yer han's!"

Jesse raked in the di'mon' rings,

The big gold watches an' the yuther things;

Jesse divvied 'em then an' thar

With a cryin' child had lost her mar.

The U. S. Troopers is after Jess;

*(Roll on, Missouri!)*

Their hawses sweat foam, but he's gone Wes';

*(Hear Missouri roar!)*

He was broad as a b'ar, he'd a ches' like a drum,

*(Wind an' rain through Missouri!)*

An' his red hair flamed like Kingdom Come.

*(Missouri down to the sea!)*

Jesse James all alone in the rain

Stopped an' stuck up the Eas'-boun' train;

Swayed through the coaches with horns an' a tail,

Lit out with the bullion an' the registered mail.



Jess made 'em all turn green with fright,  
 Quakin' in the aisles in the pitch-black night;  
 An' he give all the bullion to a pore ole tramp  
 Campin' nigh the cuttin' in the dirt an' damp.

The whole U. S. is after Jess;  
*(Roll on, Missouri!)*  
 The son-of-a-gun, if he ain't gone Wes';  
*(Missouri to the sea!)*  
 He could chaw cold iron an' spit blue flame;  
*(Cataracks down the Missouri!)*  
 He rode on a catamount he'd larned to tame.  
*(Hear that Missouri roll!)*

Jesse James rode into a bank;  
 Give his pinto a tetch on the flank;  
 Jumped the teller's window with an awful crash;  
 Heaved up the safe an' twirled his mustache;

He said, "So long, boys!" He yelped, "So long!  
 Feelin' porely to-day—I ain't feelin' strong!"  
 Rode right through the wall agoin' crack-crack-crack,—  
 Took the safe home to Mother in a gunny-sack.

They're creepin', they're crawlin', they're stalkin' Jess;  
*(Roll on, Missouri!)*  
 They's a rumor he's gone much further Wes';  
*(Roll, Missouri, roll!)*  
 They's word of a cayuse hitched to the bars  
*(Ruddy clouds on Missouri!)*  
 Of a golden sunset that busts into stars.  
*(Missouri, roll down!)*



Jesse James rode hell fer leather;  
He was a hawse an' a man together;  
In a cave in a mountain high up in air  
He lived with a rattlesnake, a wolf, an' a bear.

Jesse's heart was as sof' as a woman;  
Fer guts an' stren'th he was sooper-human;  
He could put six shots through a woodpecker's eye  
And take in one swaller a gallon o' rye.

They sought him here an' they sought him there,  
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)  
But he strides by night through the ways of the air,  
(*Brown Missouri rolls!*)  
They say he was took an' they say he is dead;  
(*Thunder, Missouri!*)  
But he ain't—he's a sunset overhead!  
(*Missouri down to the sea!*)

Jesse James was a Hercules.  
When he went through the woods he tore up the trees.  
When he went on the plains he smoked the groun'  
An' the hull lan' shuddered fer miles aroun'.

Jesse James wore a red bandanner  
That waved on the breeze like the Star Spangled Banner;  
In seven states he cut up dadoes.  
He's gone with the buffler an' the desperadoes.

Yes, Jesse James was a two-gun man  
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)  
The same as when this song began;  
(*From Kansas to Illinois!*)

BENÉT

An' when you see a sunset bust into flames

*(Lightnin' light the Missouri!)*

Or a thunderstorm blaze—that's Jesse James!

*(Hear that Missouri roll!)*



\* B A R T O L O M E O V A N Z E T T I \*

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LAST SPEECH TO THE COURT

I HAVE talk a great deal of myself  
but I even forgot to name Sacco.  
Sacco too is a worker,  
from his boyhood a skilled worker, lover of work,  
with a good job and pay,  
a bank account, a good and lovely wife,  
two beautiful children and a neat little home  
at the verge of a wood, near a brook.

Sacco is a heart, a faith, a character, a man;  
a man, lover of nature, and mankind;  
a man who gave all, who sacrifice all  
to the cause of liberty and to his love for mankind:  
money, rest, mundane ambition,  
his own wife, his children, himself  
and his own life.

Sacco has never dreamt to steal, never to assassinate.  
He and I have never brought a morsel  
of bread to our mouths, from our childhood to today  
which has not been gained by the sweat of our brows.  
Never . . .

Oh, yes, I may be more witful, as some have put it;  
I am a better babbler than he is, but many, many times



in hearing his heartfelt voice ringing a faith sublime,  
in considering his supreme sacrifice, remembering his  
heroism,

I felt small at the presence of his greatness  
and found myself compelled to fight back  
from my eyes the tears,  
and quench my heart  
throbbing to my throat to not weep before him:  
this man called thief and assassin and doomed.

But Sacco's name will live in the hearts of the people  
and in their gratitude when Katzmann's bones  
and yours will be dispersed by time;  
when your name, his name, your laws, institutions,  
and your false god are but a dim remembering  
of a cursed past in which man was wolf  
to the man. . . .

If it had not been for these thing  
I might have live out my life  
talking at street corners to scorning men.  
I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure.  
Now we are not a failure.  
This is our career and our triumph. Never  
in our full life could we hope to do such work  
for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding  
of man, as now we do by accident.  
Our words, our lives, our pains—nothing!  
The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and  
a poor fishpeddler—  
all! That last moment belongs to us—  
that agony is our triumph.



\* MALCOLM COWLEY \*

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FOR ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S EVE

*(August 23, 1927)*

THEN die!

Outside the prison gawk  
the crowds that you will see no more.  
A door slams shut behind you. Walk  
with turnkeys down a corridor  
smelling of lysol, through the gates  
to where a drunken sheriff waits.

St. Nicholas who blessed your birth,  
whose hands are rich with gifts, will bear  
no further gifts to you on earth,  
Sacco, whose heart abounds in prayer  
neither to Pilate nor a saint  
whose earthly sons die innocent.

And you that would not bow your knee  
to God, swarthy Bartholomew,  
no God will grant you liberty,  
nor Virgin intercede for you,  
nor bones of yours make sweet the plot  
where governors and judges rot.

A doctor sneezes. A chaplain maps  
the routes to heaven. You mount the chair.

COHLEY

A jailor buckles tight the straps  
like those which aviators wear.  
The surgeon makes a signal.

Die!

lost symbols of our liberty.

Beyond the chair, beyond the bars  
of day and night, your path lies free;  
yours is an avenue of stars:  
march on, O dago Christs, while we  
march on to spread your name abroad  
like ashes in the winds of God.



THE HILL ABOVE THE MINE

NOBODY comes to the graveyard on the hill,  
lost on the blackened slope above the mine,  
where coke-oven fumes drift heavily by day  
and creeping fires at night; nobody stirs  
here by the crumbling wall, where headstones loom  
among the blackberry vines; nobody walks  
in the blue starlight under the cedar branches  
twisted and black against the moon, nor speaks  
except the unquiet company of the dead,

and one who calls the roll:

“Ezekiel Cowley?”

Dead.

“Laban and Uriah Evans?”

Dead.

“Jasper McCullough, your three wives, your thirty  
children, of whom four bastards?”

Dead, all dead.

“Simon Eliot? Sergeant Danny George?  
Judge Peter and Sarah Ellen Farbaugh?”

Dead,

sleeping under the brambles in the starlight  
above the unpainted cabins and the mine.

What have you seen, O dead?



“We saw our woods  
butchered, flames curling in the maple tops,  
white ashes drifting, a railroad in the valley  
bridging the creek, and mines under the hill.  
We saw our farms lie fallow and houses grow  
all summer in the flowerless meadows. Rats  
all winter gnawed the last husks in the barn.  
In spring the waters rose, crept through the fields  
and stripped them bare of soil, while on the hill  
we waited and stood firm.”

Wait on, O dead!

The waters still shall rise, the hills fold in,  
the tombs open to heaven, and you shall ride  
eastward on a rain-wind, spurring the thunder,  
your white bones drifting like herons across the moon.



THE LONG VOYAGE

Nor that the pines were darker there,  
nor mid-May dogwood brighter there,  
nor swifts more swift in summer air;  
it was my own country,

having its thunderclap of spring,  
its long midsummer ripening,  
its corn hoar-stiff at harvesting,  
almost like any country,

yet being mine; its face, its speech,  
its hills bent low within my reach,  
its river birch and upland beech  
were mine, of my own country.

Now the dark waters at the bow  
fold back, like earth against the plow;  
foam brightens like the dogwood now  
at home, in my own country.

\* K A Y B O Y L E \*

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## SPIRITUAL FOR NINE VOICES

I WENT last night to a turkey feast (Oh, God, don't fail your children now!)

My people were sitting there the way they'll sit in heaven  
With their wings spread out and their hearts all singing  
Their mouths full of food and the table set with glass  
(Oh, God, don't fail your children now!)

There were poor men sitting with their fingers dripping honey.  
All the ugly sisters were fair. I saw my brother who never had  
a penny

With a silk shirt on and a pair of golden braces  
And gems strewn through his hair.

(Were you looking, Father, when the sheriffs came in?  
Was your face turned towards us when they had their say?)

There was baked sweet potato and fried corn pone

There was eating galore, there was plenty in the horn.

(Were you there when Victoria Price took the stand?

Did you see the state attorney with her drawers in his hand?

Did you hear him asking for me to burn?)

There were oysters cooked in amplitude

There was sauce in every mouth.

There was ham done slow in spice and clove

And chicken enough for the young and the old.



*MODERN POETRY*

(Was it you stilled the waters on horse-swapping day  
When the mob came to the jail? Was it you come out in a long  
tail coat  
Come dancing high with the word in your mouth?)

I saw my sister who never had a cent  
Come shaking and shuffling between the seats.  
Her hair was straight and her nails were pointed  
Her breasts were high and her legs double-jointed.

(O, God, don't fail your children now!)

THE LEGION OF IRON

THEY pass through the great iron gates—  
Men with eyes gravely discerning,  
Skilled to appraise the tonnage of cranes  
Or split an inch into thousandths—  
Men tempered by fire as the ore is  
And planned to resistance  
Like steel that has cooled in the trough;  
Silent of purpose, inflexible, set to fulfilment—  
To conquer, withstand, overthrow. . . .  
Men mannered to large undertakings,  
Knowing force as a brother  
And power as something to play with,  
Seeing blood as a slip of the iron,  
To be wiped from the tools  
Lest they rust.

But what if they stood aside,  
Who hold the earth so careless in the crook of their arms?

What of the flamboyant cities  
And the lights guttering out like candles in a wind . . .  
And the armies halted. . . .  
And the train midway on the mountain  
And idle men chaffing across the trenches . . .  
And the cursing and lamentation



*MODERN POETRY*

And the clamor for grain shut in the mills of the world?  
What if they stayed apart,  
Inscrutably smiling,  
Leaving the ground encumbered with dead wire  
And the sea to row-boats  
And the lands marooned—  
Till time should like a paralytic sit,  
A mildewed hulk above the nations squatting?

\* STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT \*

*(With Rosemary Benét)*

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Rhymes from A BOOK OF AMERICANS

1

*Thomas Jefferson 1743-1825*

THOMAS JEFFERSON  
What do you say  
Under the gravestone  
Hidden away?

"I was a giver,  
I was a moulder,  
I was builder  
With a strong shoulder."

Six feet and over,  
Large-boned and ruddy,  
The eyes grey-hazel  
But bright with study.

The big hands clever  
With pen and fiddle  
And ready, ever,  
For any riddle.



MODERN POETRY

From buying empires,  
To planting 'taters,  
From Declarations  
To trick dumb-waiters.

"I liked the people,  
The sweat and crowd of them,  
Trusted them always  
And spoke aloud of them.

"I liked all learning  
And wished to share it  
Abroad like pollen  
For all who merit.

"I liked queer gadgets  
And secret shelves,  
And helping nations  
To rule themselves."

2

*John Quincy Adams 1767-1848*

When President John Quincy  
Set out to take a swim,  
He'd hang his Presidential clothes  
Upon a hickory limb  
And bound in the Potomac  
Like a dolphin on the swell.  
—He was extremely dignified  
But rather plump, as well.  
And when Supreme Court Justices  
Remarked, from a canoe,  
"Our Presidents don't do such things."  
He merely said, "I do."

*BENÉT*

He never asked what people thought  
But gave them tit for tat.  
The Adamses have always been  
Remarkably like that.

3

*Daniel Boone 1797-1889*

When Daniel Boone goes by at night  
The phantom deer arise  
And all lost, wild America  
Is burning in their eyes.

4

*Abraham Lincoln 1809-1865*

Lincoln was a long man.  
He liked out of doors.  
He liked the wind blowing  
And the talk in country stores.

He liked telling stories,  
He liked telling jokes.  
"Abe's quite a character,"  
Said quite a lot of folks.

Lots of folks in Springfield  
Saw him every day,  
Walking down the street  
In his gaunt, long way.

Shawl around his shoulders,  
Letters in his hat.  
"That's Abe Lincoln."  
They thought no more than that.



*MODERN POETRY*

Knew that he was honest,  
Guessed that he was odd,  
Knew he had a cross wife  
Though she was a Todd.

Knew he had three little boys  
Who liked to shout and play,  
Knew he had a lot of debts  
It took him years to pay.

Knew his clothes and knew his house  
"That's his office, here.  
Blame good lawyer on the whole,  
Though he's sort of queer.

"Sure, he went to Congress, once,  
But he didn't stay.  
Can't expect us all to be  
Smart as Henry Clay.

Need a man for troubled times?  
Well, I guess we do.  
Wonder who we'll ever find?  
Yes—I wonder who."

That is how they met and talked,  
Knowing and unknowing.  
Lincoln was the green pine.  
Lincoln kept on growing.



## LITANY FOR DICTATORSHIPS

FOR all those beaten, for the broken heads,  
 The fosterless, the simple, the oppressed,  
 The ghosts in the burning city of our time . . .

For those taken in rapid cars to the house and beaten  
 By the skilful boys, the boys with the rubber fists,  
 —Held down and beaten, the table cutting their loins,  
 Or kicked in the groin and left, with the muscles jerking  
 Like a headless hen's on the floor of the slaughter-house  
 While they brought the next man in with his white eyes  
 staring.

For those who still said "Red Front!" or "God Save the  
 Crown!"

And for those who were not courageous  
 But were beaten nevertheless.

For those who spit out the bloody stumps of their teeth  
 Quietly in the hall,  
 Sleep well on stone or iron, watch for the time  
 And kill the guard in the privy before they die,  
 Those with the deep-socketed eyes and the lamp burning.

For those who carry the scars, who walk lame—for those  
 Whose nameless graves are made in the prison-yard  
 And the earth smoothed back before morning and the lime  
 scattered.

For those slain at once. For those living through months  
 and years

Enduring, watching, hoping, going each day  
 To the work or the queue for meat or the secret club,



Living meanwhile, begetting children, smuggling guns,  
And found and killed at the end like rats in a drain.

For those escaping  
Incredibly into exile and wandering there.  
For those who live in the small rooms of foreign cities  
And who yet think of the country, the long green grass,  
The childhood voices, the language, the way wind smelt  
then,

The shape of rooms, the coffee drunk at the table,  
The talk with friends, the loved city, the waiter's face,  
The gravestones, with the name, where they will not lie  
Nor in any of that earth. Their children are strangers.  
For those who planned and were leaders and were beaten  
And for those, humble and stupid, who had no plan  
But were denounced, but grew angry, but told a joke,  
But could not explain, but were sent away to the camp,  
But had their bodies shipped back in the sealed coffins,  
"Died of pneumonia." "Died trying to escape."

For those growers of wheat who were shot by their own  
wheat-stacks,  
For those growers of bread who were sent to the ice-  
locked wastes,  
And their flesh remembers their fields.  
For those denounced by their smug, horrible children  
For a peppermint-star and the praise of the Perfect State,  
For all those strangled or gelded or merely starved  
To make perfect states; for the priest hanged in his  
cassock,  
The Jew with his chest crushed in and his eyes dying,  
The revolutionist lynched by the private guards  
To make perfect states, in the names of the perfect states.



For those betrayed by the neighbors they shook hands with  
 And for the traitors, sitting in the hard chair  
 With the loose sweat crawling their hair and their fingers  
     restless  
 As they tell the street and the house and the man's name.

And for those sitting at table in the house  
 With the lamp lit and the plates and the smell of food,  
 Talking so quietly; when they hear the cars  
 And the knock at the door, and they look at each other  
     quickly  
 And the woman goes to the door with a stiff face,  
 Smoothing her dress.

“We are all good citizens here.  
 We believe in the Perfect State.”

And that was the last

Time Tony or Karl or Shorty came to the house  
 And the family was liquidated later.  
 It was the last time.

We heard the shots in the night

But nobody knew next day what the trouble was  
 And a man must go to his work. So I didn't see him  
 For three days, then, and me near out of my mind  
 And all the patrols on the streets with their dirty guns  
 And when he came back, he looked drunk, and the blood  
     was on him.

For the women who mourn their dead in the secret night,  
 For the children taught to keep quiet, the old children,  
 The children spat-on at school.

For the wrecked laboratory,

The gutted house, the dunged-picture, the pissed-in well,



## MODERN POETRY

The naked corpse of Knowledge flung in the square  
And no man lifting a hand and no man speaking.

For the cold of the pistol-butt and the bullet's heat,  
For the rope that chokes, the manacles that bind,  
The huge voice, metal, that lies from a thousand tubes  
And the stuttering machine-gun that answers all.

For the man crucified on the crossed machine-guns  
Without name, without resurrection, without stars,  
His dark head heavy with death and his flesh long sour  
With the smell of his many prisons—John Smith, John  
Doe,

John Nobody—oh, crack your mind for his name!  
Faceless as water, naked as the dust,  
Dishonored as the earth the gas-shells poison  
And barbarous with portent.

This is he.

This is the man they ate at the green table  
Putting their gloves on ere they touch the meat.  
This is the fruit of war, the fruit of peace,  
The ripeness of invention, the new lamb,  
The answer to the wisdom of the wise.  
And still he hangs, and still he will not die,  
And still, on the steel city of our years  
The light fails and the terrible blood streams down.

We thought we were done with these things but we were  
wrong.

We thought, because we had power, we had wisdom.  
We thought the long train would run to the end of Time.  
We thought the light would increase.  
Now the long train stands derailed and the bandits loot it.

*BENÉT*

Now the boar and the asp have power in our time.  
Now the night rolls back on the West and the night is solid.  
Our fathers and ourselves sowed dragon's teeth.  
Our children know and suffer the armed men.



\* T H O M A S W O L F E \*

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THAT SHARP KNIFE

Y<sup>ES</sup>,  
And in that month when Proserpine comes back,  
And Ceres' dead heart rekindles,  
When all the woods  
Are a tender smoky blur,  
And birds no bigger than a budding leaf  
Dart through the singing trees,  
And when odorous tar comes spongy in the streets,  
And boys roll balls of it upon their tongues,  
And they are lumpy with tops and agate marbles;  
And there is blasting thunder in the night,  
And the soaking million-footed rain,  
And one looks out at morning on a stormy sky,  
A broken wrack of cloud;  
And when the mountain boy brings water  
To his kinsmen laying fence,  
And as the wind snakes through the grasses  
Hears far in the valley below  
The long wail of the whistle,  
And the faint clangor of a bell;  
And the blue great cup of the hills  
Seems closer, nearer,  
For he has heard an inarticulate promise:  
He has been pierced by Spring,  
That sharp knife.

## WOLFE

And life unscales its rusty weathered pelt  
And earth wells out in tender exhaustless strength,  
And the cup of a man's heart runs over  
With dateless expectancy, tongueless promise,  
Indefinable desire.  
Something gathers in the throat,  
Something blinds him in the eyes,  
And faint and valorous horns sound through the earth.

And little girls trot pigtailed  
Primly on their dutiful way to school;  
But the young gods loiter:  
They hear the reed, the oaten-stop,  
The running goathoofs in the spongy wood,  
Here, there, everywhere;  
They dawdle, listen,  
Fleetest when they wait,  
Go vaguely on to their one fixed home,  
Because the earth is full of ancient rumor  
And they cannot find the way.

All of the gods have lost the way.



*MODERN POETRY*

**SOMETHING HAS SPOKEN TO ME IN THE NIGHT**

**S**OMETHING has spoken to me in the night,  
Burning the tapers of the waning year;  
Something has spoken in the night,  
And told me I shall die, I know not where.

Saying:

“To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing;  
To lose the life you have, for greater life;  
To leave the friends you loved, for greater loving;  
To find a land more kind than home, more large than  
earth—

“Whereon the pillars of this earth are founded,  
Toward which the conscience of the world is tending—  
A wind is rising, and the rivers flow.”

McSORLEY'S BAR

MAC had a place to drink and talk downtown  
Where only men were welcome, or grown boys.  
When the grey snow flew, there was the forum stove  
Where arguments were slow, and out of noise.  
The dust was old as Sumter, and the talking  
Had never stopped since Dixie went to war;  
And all the men from Grant to Hayes to now  
Had lived beside, been buried from that bar.  
There, in the evening, the city carpenter  
Bumped up a drink with one of Croker's men  
And politics and poetry were one  
From supper-time until it closed at ten.  
The grey-haired men considered from their chairs  
How time is emptied like a single ale;  
Their china eyes saw tabby woo the fire  
As men their recollections, at the rail.  
Here, among blackened walls, men's time  
Flowed past like peaceful dreams of Chinamen  
Who sat in temples thinking of those flowers  
That die, and live, and close their blooms again.  
Here the day's passions, after dusk,  
Would, while the children called beneath the L,  
Draw in like coals in pipes to gleam a silence  
Between the words that cursed or wished them well.  
Privilege, and extortion, and corruption,



*MODERN POETRY*

Or the wreck of the city, or some newer way to power,  
Described the moving lives of living men  
In voices where each hero had his hour.  
And sorrow that rendezvoused in here  
Flowed like a stellar scheme whose dying ions  
Cascade toward night, when orders somewhere else  
Gather the suns like a summer's dandelions.

## THE LABORATORY MIDNIGHT

SCIENCE is what the world is, earth and water.  
And what its seasons do. And what space fountained it.  
It is forges hidden underground. It is the dawn's slow salvo.  
It is in the closed retort. And it is not yet.

It looks up and counts the Perseids in August,  
A fire from nowhere like signals overhead  
And it looks for portents, as redmen on a hill,  
In the white stream where Altair swims with the Andromedid.

Now you who know what to believe, who have God with you  
By desk and bed, blue fire in the stove;  
Whom the rains from the northeast alter but perfect  
Into new powers, and new pities, and new love;

Go look in lava flows for newer elements,  
And dismantle the electric shape of matter like a house;  
And weigh the mountains in small sensitive scales;  
Break buds; and test the senses of a mouse;

And if you are unpanicked, tell me what you find  
On how the sun flies and the snow is spent,  
What blasts and bessemers we live in, that dissolve  
All the loam loaned to spine and ligament.



\* B A B E T T E D E U T S C H \*

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CARAPACE

NOR tropic suns can smoke  
Nor arctic blizzards freeze  
The heart that once had broke  
At such fine savageries.  
Now it is guarded well,  
Ribbed with a leathern truss;  
Not the mad tiger's fell  
But calm rhinoceros'  
Obdurate hide affords  
Defense against all hurt.  
Nothing can shake the cords  
Under that armored shirt.  
Hang it upon barbed wire  
Through which the children stare:  
This muscle will not tire,  
It will not even tear.  
Or send it out to swim  
With sailors who go down  
At a flaming comber's whim:  
This heart will never drown.  
Where cities shrivel in  
Hot ashes it has learned  
How an asbestos skin  
Is blackened but not burned.  
No wound will make it sore,

*DEUTSCH*

So strongly is it knit.  
Now grief and rage no more  
Can pierce or sicken it.  
Beyond the chill of fear,  
It beats behind a wall  
Too thick for agony  
To rock with any call.  
It has no eye, no ear.  
Then who would hear  
If once this heart should cry?



\* JOSEPHINE W. JOHNSON \*

---

FINAL AUTUMN

**E**ND will come swiftly in an early autumn,  
Forewarned by blooded rising of the moon,  
Its great arc swollen like a hill of fire,  
And long continuous lightning in the north,  
Portent of that unearthly rain whose knives  
Shall slash the hard integument of earth  
Down to its unknown core.  
And man, having ravaged earth's beauty and outlived  
her prime,  
Strained from her hands all mystery and dark,  
Shall hear  
The far wasp-whispering of the flames to come  
Over the outworn cities and infertile soil;  
Shall know the fierce increasing sound  
Of iron cities' great volcanic death,  
The roar of oak fire and the straining steel,  
The quivering to and fro of towers  
Like fiery grass stems in a wind.  
And over the broken face of earth shall sear  
Iron of the cauterizing flame,  
Over the unclean, crying mouths  
The clean sound of the flame.

And some men in this hour of death shall know  
More heat and glory than had ever come

JOHNSON

Into the spare and cautious veins of life,  
And cry out with the tardy grief of those who find  
Night of a great and unreturning day  
In which they had no part.  
And some by light of this flame-opened hour  
Shall face  
The knotted fabric of their lives  
—Woven in darkness and unseen till now,  
And will be glad to die.

But there shall be no grief so bitter,  
Nor any anguish on the earth that can compare  
With the intolerable bitterness of those voices that shall  
cry—  
Not out of fear of this great tidal flame—  
Not for the ashless bodies of the dead,  
But out of the knowledge that this burning means  
The long ritual of Life brought to a close  
In the high horror and red pageantry of Death,  
With still the face of God unseen,  
His great confessional unread.



\* R O Y C A M P B E L L \*

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THE SERF

HIS naked skin clothed in the torrid mist  
That puffs in smoke around the patient hooves,  
The ploughman drives, a slow somnanbulist,  
And through the green his crimson furrow grooves.  
His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain,  
Long by the rasping share of insult torn,  
Red clod, to which the war-cry once was rain  
And tribal spears the fatal sheaves of corn,  
Lies fallow now. But as the turf divides  
I see in the slow progress of his strides  
Over the toppled clods and falling flowers,  
The timeless, surly patience of the serf  
That moves the nearest to the naked earth  
And ploughs down palaces, and thrones, and towers.

OUR LADY PEACE

How far is it to peace, the piper sighed,  
The solitary, sweating as he paused.  
Asphalt the noon; the ravens, terrified,  
Fled carrion thunder that percussion caused.

The envelope of earth was powder loud;  
The taut wings shivered, driven at the sun.  
The piper put his pipe away and bowed.  
Not here, he said. I hunt the love-cool one,

The dancer with the clipped hair. Where is she?  
We shook our heads, parting for him to pass.  
Our lady was of no such trim degree,  
And none of us had seen her face, alas.

She was the very ridges we must scale,  
Securing the rough top. And how she smiled  
Was how our strength would issue. Not to fail  
Was having her, gigantic, undefiled,

For homely goddess, big as the world that burned,  
Grandmother and taskmistress, field and town.  
We let the stranger go; but when we turned  
Our lady lived, fierce in each other's frown.



THE SINGLE HERO

**T**HIS man kept courage when the map of fear  
Was continents, was paleness to the poles,  
Was Jupiter milk white, was Venus burning.  
The very stones lay liquid with despair,  
And the firm earth was bottomless. This man

Could walk upon that water; nay, he stamped  
Till the drops gravelled, till a sound returned  
Of pillars underheel, of granite growing.  
This man, alone on seas, was not afraid.  
So continents came back. So color widened:

Bands upon blankness. So the other men,  
The millions, lifted feet and let them down;  
And the soil held. So courage's cartographer,  
Having his globe again, restored each mass,  
Each meadow. And the grasshoppers sang to him.

\* P A U L E N G L E \*

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From AMERICA REMEMBERS

HERE by this midland lake, the sand-shored water  
That pulses with no sea-tide heart, where the grain  
Of a nation pauses on its golden way  
To the world's belly, and the long trains punge . . .

\*

I remember men, callers  
To gods in the gusty rain, to the thunder birds,  
Chippers of flint, scratchers of soil thinly  
(Now has the earth been torn with the anvil-hammered  
Plough deeply for our hunger, and the black shaft sunk).  
The trail through the hills was moccasin wide and a stone  
Twisted it, the rivers were swum. (What of this  
Concrete trampling, the wild arum, the arched bridge?)  
The continent lived in its own and eternal way  
Dreamless of change.

\*

And all  
The pulses of the earth were stirred by the pounding  
Heart of America and poured their blood  
Over the great sea arteries, finding  
Sometimes a country like their own, the Finns  
By the Minnesota lakes, the Germans over  
The prairie farms of Iowa, the English  
In the Berkshire hills and valleys. The Southern folk



Left the gay dances, the vineyards mellowed with sunlight

On the terraced hills, and as Wop and Dago joined  
Polack and Bohunk in the towns of steel  
Where the great fires burned their guts out—Bethlehem  
(O mockery of the little Christ-found village), Gary,  
Youngstown, the hard, trip-hammer-beaten names.  
The ancient features of the type were changed  
Under a different sun, in a clearer air  
That entered the lungs like wine, the swarthy face  
Paled, cheek bones lifted and narrowed, hair  
Straightened and faded, and the body moved  
With a lighter step, the toes springy, the eyes  
Eager as a bird's, and every man  
Had a coiled spring in his nerves that drove him  
In a restless fury of life.

The bloods mingled

Madly, the redflame of the sons of men  
Who had rowed Ulysses on the wine-dark sea  
Burned in the pale blue eyes of the North, eyes hardened  
With centuries of staring from Viking masts  
Into the unknown oceans—Leif the Lucky  
Once beached their dragon-headed prows on the bare  
Coast of this land, the first white man. (Who knows  
What strange multi-fathered child will come  
Out of the nervous travail of these bloods  
To fashion in a new world continent  
A newer breed of men?)



\* P A R E L O R E N T Z \*

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From THE RIVER  
*Soundtrack of the Motion Picture*

BLACK spruce and Norway pine,  
Douglas fir and Red cedar,  
Scarlet oak and Shagbark hickory.  
We built a hundred cities and a thousand towns—  
But at what a cost!  
We cut the top off the Alleghenies and sent it down the  
river.  
We cut the top off Minnesota and sent it down the river.  
We cut the top off Wisconsin and sent it down the river.  
We left the mountains and the hills slashed and burned,  
And moved on.

\*

We built a hundred cities and a thousand towns—  
But at what a cost!  
Poor land makes poor people.  
Poor people make poor land.

\*

We got the blacks to plant the cotton and they gouged  
the top off the valley.  
We got the Swedes to cut the forests, and they sent them  
down the river.  
Then we left a hollow-eyed generation to peck at the  
worn-out valley;



MODERN POETRY

And left the Swedes to shiver in their naked North  
country.

1903, 1907, 1913, 1922, 1927, 1936, 1937—

For you can't wall out and dam two-thirds the water in  
the country.

We built dams but the dams filled in.

We built a thousand-mile dyke but it didn't hold;

So we built it higher.

We played with a continent for fifty years.

*Flood control? Of the Mississippi?*

Control from Denver to Helena;

From Itasca to Paducah;

From Pittsburgh to Cairo—

Control of the wheat, the corn and the cotton land;

Control enough to put back a thousand forests;

Control enough to put the river together again before

it is too late . . . before it has picked up the heart of a  
continent and shoved it into the Gulf of Mexico.

HOPE IS A TATTERED FLAG

HOPE is a tattered flag and a dream out of time.  
Hope is a heartspun word, the rainbow, the shadblow in  
white,  
The evening star inviolable over the coal mines,  
The shimmer of northern lights across a bitter winter night,  
The blue hills beyond the smoke of the steel works,  
The birds who go on singing to their mates in peace, war,  
peace,  
The ten-cent crocus bulb blooming in a used-car salesroom,  
The horseshoe over the door, the luckpiece in the pocket,  
The kiss and the comforting laugh and resolve—  
Hope is an echo, hope ties itself yonder, yonder.

The spring grass showing itself where least expected,  
The rolling fluff of white clouds on a changeable sky,  
The broadcast of strings from Japan, bells from Moscow,  
Of the voice of the prime minister of Sweden carried  
Across the sea in behalf of a world family of nations  
And children singing chorals of the Christ child  
And Bach being broadcast from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
And tall skyscrapers practically empty of tenants  
And the hands of strong men groping for handholds  
And the Salvation Army singing God loves us. . . .



THE PEOPLE, YES, THE PEOPLE

THE people, yes, the people,  
Until the people are taken care of one way or another,  
Until the people are solved somehow for the day and hour,  
Until then one hears "Yes but the people what about the  
people?"

Sometimes as though the people is a child to be pleased or  
fed

Or again a hoodlum you have to be tough with  
And seldom as though the people is a caldron and a res-  
ervoir

Of the human reserves that shape history,  
The river of welcome wherein the broken First Families  
fade,

The great pool wherein wornout breeds and clans drop  
for restorative silence.

Fire, chaos, shadows,  
Events trickling from a thin line of flame  
On into cries and combustions never expected!  
The people have the element of surprise.

Where are the kings today?  
What has become of their solid and fastened thrones?  
Who are the temporary puppets holding sway while any-  
thing,

"God only knows that," waits around a corner, sits in  
the shadows and holds an ax, waiting for the ap-  
pointed hour?

"The czar has eight million men with guns and  
bayonets.



"Nothing can happen to the czar.

"The czar is the voice of God and shall live forever.

"Turn and look at the forest of steel and cannon

"Where the czar is guarded by eight million soldiers.

"Nothing can happen to the czar."

They said that for years and in the summer of 1914  
In the Year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Four-  
teen

As a portent and an assurance they said with owl faces:

"Nothing can happen to the czar."

Yet the czar and his bodyguard of eight million vanished  
And the czar stood in the cellar before a little firing squad  
And the command of fire was given

And the czar stepped into regions of mist and ice  
The czar travelled into an ethereal uncharted siberia  
While two kaisers also vanished from thrones  
Ancient and established in blood and iron—

Two kaisers backed by ten million bayonets  
Had their crowns in a gutter, their palaces mobbed.

In fire, chaos, shadows,  
In hurricanes beyond foretelling of probabilities,  
In the shove and whirl of unforeseen combustions

The people, yes, the people,  
Move eternally in the elements of surprise,  
Changing from hammer to bayonet and back to hammer,  
The hallelujah chorus forever shifting its star soloists.



SLEEP IS A SUSPENSION

SLEEP is a suspension midway  
and a conundrum of shadows  
lost in the meadows of the moon.

The people sleep.

Ai! ai! the people sleep.

Yet the sleepers toss in sleep  
and an end comes of sleep  
and the sleepers wake.

Ai! ai! the sleepers wake!

# THE PEOPLE WILL LIVE ON

THE people will live on.

The learning and blundering people will live on.  
They will be tricked and sold and again sold  
And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,

The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,  
You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.  
The mammoth rests between his cyclonic dramas.

The people so often sleepy, weary, enigmatic,  
is a vast huddle with many units saying:

"I earn my living.  
I make enough to get by  
and it takes all my time.  
If I had more time  
I could do more for myself  
and maybe for others.  
I could read and study  
and talk things over  
and find out about things.  
It takes time.  
I wish I had the time."

The people is a tragic and comic two-face:  
hero and hoodlum: phantom and gorilla twist-  
ing to moan with a gargoyle mouth: "They  
buy me and sell me . . . it's a game . . .  
sometime I'll break loose . . ."

Once having marched  
Over the margins of animal necessity,



Over the grim line of sheer subsistence

Then man came

To the deeper rituals of his bones,

To the lights lighter than any bones,

To the time for thinking things over,

To the dance, the song, the story,

Or the hours given over to dreaming,

Once having so marched.

Between the finite limitations of the five senses  
and the endless yearnings of man for the beyond  
the people hold to the humdrum bidding of work and  
food

while reaching out when it comes their way  
for lights beyond the prison of the five senses,  
for keepsakes lasting beyond any hunger or death.

This reaching is alive.

The panderers and liars have violated and smutted it.

Yet this reaching is alive yet  
for lights and keepsakes.

The people know the salt of the sea  
and the strength of the winds  
lashing the corners of the earth.

The people take the earth  
as a tomb of rest and a cradle of hope.  
Who else speaks for the Family of Man?  
They are in tune and step  
with constellations of universal law.

The people is a polychrome,  
a spectrum and a prism  
held in a moving monolith,

a console organ of changing themes,  
 a clavilux of color poems  
 wherein the sea offers fog  
 and the fog moves off in rain  
 and the labrador sunset shortens  
 to a nocturne of clear stars  
 serene over the shot spray  
 of northern lights.

The steel mill sky is alive.  
 The fire breaks white and zigzag  
 shot on a gun-metal gloaming.  
 Man is a long time coming.  
 Man will yet win.  
 Brother may yet line up with brother:

This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers.  
 There are men who can't be bought.  
 The fireborn are at home in fire.  
 The stars make no noise.  
 You can't hinder the wind from blowing.  
 Time is a great teacher.  
 Who can live without hope?  
 In the darkness with a great bundle of grief  
 the people march.  
 In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for  
 keeps, the people march:

“Where to? What next?”





## \* PART THREE \*

---

*A poem should be palpable and mute  
As a globed fruit*

*Dumb  
As old medallions to the thumb*

*Silent as the sleeve-worn stone  
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—*

*A poem should be wordless  
As the flight of birds*

\*

*A poem should be motionless in time  
As the moon climbs*

*Leaving, as the moon releases  
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,*

*Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,  
Memory by memory the mind—*

*A poem should be motionless in time  
As the moon climbs*

\*



MODERN POETRY

*A poem should be equal to:*

*Not true*

*For all the history of grief*

*An empty doorway and a maple leaf*

*For love*

*The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—*

*A poem should not mean*

*But be*

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

\* A M Y L O W E L L \*

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## LITTLE IVORY FIGURES PULLED WITH STRING

Is it the tinkling of mandolins which disturbs you?  
Or the dropping of bitter-orange petals among the coffee-cups?

Or the slow creeping of the moonlight between the olive-trees?

Drop! drop! the rain  
Upon the thin plates of my heart.

String your blood to chord with this music,  
Stir your heels upon the cobbles to the rhythm of a dance-tune.

They have slim thighs and arms of silver;  
The moon washes away their garments;  
They make a pattern of fleeing feet in the branch shadows,  
And the green grapes knotted about them  
Burst as they press against one another.

The rain knocks upon the plates of my heart,  
They are crumpled with its beating.

Would you drink only from your brains, Old Man?  
See, the moonlight has reached your knees,  
It falls upon your head in an accolade of silver.  
Rise up on the music,  
Fling against the moon-drifts in a whorl of young light  
bodies:



Leaping grape-clusters,  
Vine leaves tearing from a grey wall.  
You shall run, laughing, in a braid of women,  
And weave flowers with the frosty spines of thorns.  
Why do you gaze into your glass,  
And jar the spoons with your finger-tapping?  
The rain is rigid on the plates of my heart.  
The murmur of it is loud—loud.

\* E Z R A P O U N D \*

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THE RETURN

SEE, they return; ah, see the tentative  
Movements, and the slow feet,  
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain  
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,  
With fear, as half-awakened;  
As if the snow should hesitate  
And murmur in the wind,  
and half turn back;  
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"  
Inviolable.

Gods of the wingéd shoe!  
With them the silver hounds,  
sniffing the trace of air!

Haie! Haie!  
These were the swift to harry;  
These the keen-scented;  
These were the souls of blood.

Slow on the leash,  
pallid the leash-men!



THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S WIFE: A LETTER

WHILE my hair was still cut straight across my forehead  
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.  
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,  
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.  
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:  
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.  
I never laughed, being bashful.  
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.  
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,  
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours.  
Forever and forever and forever.  
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,  
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,  
And you have been gone five months.  
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.  
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,  
Too deep to clear them away!  
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.  
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August  
Over the grass in the West garden;  
They hurt me. I grow older.

POUND

If you are coming down through the narrows of the river  
Kiang,  
Please let me know beforehand,  
And I will come out to meet you  
As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

*From the Chinese of Rihaku.*



CANTO XVII

SO THAT the vines burst from my fingers  
And the bees weighted with pollen  
Move heavily in the vine-shoots:

chirr-chirr-chir-rikk—a purring sound,  
And the birds sleepily in the branches.

ZAGREUS! IO ZAGREUS!

With the first pale-clear of the heaven  
And the cities set in their hills,  
And the goddess of the fair knees  
Moving there, with the oak-woods behind her,  
The green slope, with white hounds

leaping about her;

And thence down to the creek's mouth, until evening,  
Flat water before me,

and the trees growing in water,  
Marble trunks out of stillness,  
On past the palazzi,

in the stillness,

The light now, not of the sun.

Chrysophrase,

And the water green clear, and blue clear;  
On, to the great cliffs of amber.

Between them,

Cave of Nerea,

she like a great shell curved,  
And the boat drawn without sound,  
Without odour of ship-work,  
Nor bird-cry, nor any noise of wave moving,  
Nor splash of porpoise, nor any noise of wave moving,

**POUND**

Within her cave, Nerea,  
                                she like a great shell curved  
In the suavity of the rock,  
                                cliff green-gray in the far,  
In the near, the gate-cliffs of amber,  
And the wave  
                                green clear, and blue clear,  
And the cave salt-white, and glare-purple,  
                                cool, porphyry smooth,  
                                the rock sea-worn.  
No gull-cry, no sound of porpoise,  
Sand as of malachite, and no cold there,  
                                the light not of the sun.

Zagreus, feeding his panthers,  
the turf clear as on hills under light.  
And under the almond-trees, gods,  
with them, *choros nympharum*. Gods,  
Hermes and Athene,  
As shaft of compass,  
Between them, trembled—  
To the left is the place of fauns,  
*sylva nympharum*;  
The low wood, moor-scrub,  
the doe, the young spotted deer,  
leap up through the broom-plants,  
as dry leaf amid yellow.  
And by one cut of the hills,  
the great alley of Memnons.  
Beyond sea, crests seen over dune  
Night sea churning shingle,  
To the left, the alley of cypress.

**A boat came,**



One man holding her sail,  
 Guiding her with oar caught over gunwale, saying:  
 " There, in the forest of marble,  
 " the stone trees—out of water—  
 " the arbours of stone—  
 " marble leaf, over leaf,  
 " silver, steel over steel,  
 " silver beaks rising and crossing,  
 " prow set against prow,  
 " stone, ply over ply,  
 " the gilt beams flare of an evening"

Borso, Carmagnola, the men of craft, *i vitrei*,  
 Thither at one time, time after time,  
 And the waters richer than glass,  
 Bronze gold, the blaze over the silver,  
 Dye-pots in the torch-light,  
 The flash of wave under prows,  
 And the silver beaks rising and crossing.

Stone trees, white and rose-white in the darkness,  
 Cypress there by the towers,  
 Drift under hulls in the night.

"In the gloom the gold  
 Gathers the light about it. . . ."

Now supine in burrow, half over-arched bramble,  
 One eye for the sea, through that peek-hole,  
 Gray light, with Athene.

Zothar and her elephants, the gold loin-cloth,  
 The sistrum, shaken, shaken,  
 the cohorts of her dancers.

And Aletha, by bend of the shore,  
 with her eyes seaward,  
 and in her hands sea-wrack

*POUND*

Salt-bright with the foam.  
Koré through the bright meadow,  
    with green-gray dust in the grass:  
“For this hour, brother of Circe.”  
Arm laid over my shoulder,  
Saw the sun for three days, the sun fulvid,  
As a lion lift over sand-plain;  
  and that day,  
And for three days, and none after,  
Splendour, as the splendour of Hermes,  
And shipped thence  
                                    to the stone place,  
Pale white, over water,  
                                    known water,  
And the white forest of marble, bent bough over bough,  
The pleached arbour of stone,  
Thither Borso, when they shot the barbed arrow at him,  
And Carmagnola, between the two columns,  
Sigismundo, after that wreck in Dalmatia,  
Sunset like the grasshopper flying.



E. P. ODE POUR L'ELECTION DE SON SEPULCHRE

FOR three years, out of key with his time,  
He strove to resuscitate the dead art  
Of poetry; to maintain 'the sublime'  
In the old sense. Wrong from the start—

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born  
In a half-savage country, out of date;  
Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;  
Capaneus; trout for factitious bait;

Ἰδμεν γάρ τοι πάνθ', δσ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ  
Caught in the unstopped ear;  
Giving the rocks small lee-way  
The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.

His true Penelope was Flaubert,  
He fished by obstinate isles;  
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair  
Rather than the mottoes on sundials.

Unaffected by 'the march of events,'  
He passed from men's memory in *l'an trentiesme*,  
*De son eage*; the case presents  
No adjunct to the Muses' diadem.

II

The age demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace,  
Something for the modern stage,  
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

## POUND

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries  
Of the inward gaze;  
Better mendacities  
Than the classics in paraphrase!

The 'age demanded' chiefly a mould in plaster,  
Made with no loss of time,  
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster  
Or the 'sculpture' of rhyme.

### III

The tea-rose tea-gown, etc.  
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,  
The pianola 'replaces'  
Sappho's barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,  
Phallic and ambrosial  
Made for macerations;  
Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing,  
Sage Heracleitus says;  
But a tawdry cheapness  
Shall outlast our days.

Even the Christian beauty  
Defects—after Samothrace;  
We see τὸ καλὸν  
Decreed in the market-place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,  
Nor the saint's vision.  
We have the Press for wafer;  
Franchise for circumcision.



All men, in law, are equals.  
Free of Pisistratus.  
We choose a knave or an eunuch  
To rule over us.

O bright Apollo,  
τῖν ἀνδρα, τῖν ἥρωα, τῖνα θεόν,  
What god, man, or hero  
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

IV

These fought in any case,  
and some believing.  
pro domo, in any case . . .

Some quick to arm,  
some for adventure,  
some from fear of weakness,  
some from fear of censure,  
some for love of slaughter, in imagination,  
learning later . . .  
some in fear, learning love of slaughter;

Died some, pro patria,  
non 'dulce' non 'et decor' . . .  
walked eye-deep in hell  
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving  
came home, home to a lie,  
home to many deceits,  
home to old lies and new infamy;  
usury age-old and age-thick  
and liars in public places.

POUND

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.  
Young blood and high blood,  
fair cheeks, and fine bodies;

fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,  
disillusions as never told in the old days,  
hysterias, trench confessions,  
laughter out of dead bellies.

V

There died a myriad,  
And of the best, among them,  
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,  
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,  
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,  
For a few thousand battered books.



\* WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS \*

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THE YACHTS

CONTEND in a sea which the land partly encloses  
shielding them from the too heavy blows  
of an ungoverned ocean which when it chooses

tortures the biggest hulls, the best man knows  
to pit against its beating, and sinks them pitilessly.  
Mothlike in mists, scintillant in the minute

brilliance of cloudless days, with broad bellying sails  
they glide to the wind tossing green water  
from their sharp prows while over them the crew crawls

ant-like, solicitously grooming them, releasing,  
making fast as they turn, lean far over and having  
caught the wind again, side by side, head for the mark.

In a well guarded arena of open water surrounded by  
lesser and greater craft which, sycophant, lumbering  
and fluttering follow them, they appear youthful, rare

as the light of a happy eye, live with the grace  
of all that in the mind is feckless, free and  
naturally to be desired. Now the sea which holds them

WILLIAMS

is moody, lapping their glossy sides, as if feeling for some slightest flaw but fails completely. Today no race. Then the wind comes again. The yachts

move, jockeying for a start, the signal is set and they are off. Now the waves strike at them but they are too well made, they slip through, though they take in canvas

Arms with hands grasping seek to clutch at the prows. Bodies thrown recklessly in the way are cut aside. It is a sea of faces about them in agony, in despair

until the horror of the race dawns staggering the mind, the whole sea become an entanglement of watery bodies lost to the world bearing what they cannot hold. Broken,

beaten, desolate, reaching from the dead to be taken up they cry out, failing, failing! their cries rising in waves still as the skillful yachts pass over.



\* E . E . C U M M I N G S \*

---

MY SWEET OLD ETCETERA

MY sweet old etcetera  
aunt lucy during the recent

war could and what  
is more did tell you just  
what everybody was fighting

for,  
my sister

isabel created hundreds  
(and  
hundreds) of socks not to  
mention shirts fleaproof earwarmers

etcetera wristers etcetera, my  
mother hoped that

i would die etcetera  
bravely of course my father used  
to become hoarse talking about how it was  
a privilege and if only he  
could meanwhile my

self etcetera lay quietly  
in the deep mud et

*CUMMINGS*

cetera

(dreaming,

et

cetera, of

Your smile

eyes knees and of your Etcetera)



PARIS; THIS APRIL SUNSET COMPLETELY UTTERS

PARIS; this April sunset completely utters  
utters serenely silently a cathedral

before whose upward lean magnificent face  
the streets turn young with rain,

spiral acres of bloated rose  
coiled within cobalt miles of sky  
yield to and heed  
the mauve

of twilight(who slenderly descends,  
daintily carrying in her eyes the dangerous first stars)  
people move love hurry in a gently

arriving gloom and  
see!(the new moon  
fills abruptly with sudden silver  
these torn pockets of lame and begging colour)while  
there and here the lithe indolent prostitute  
Night,argues

with certain houses

**CUMMINGS**

## IMPOSSIBLY, MOTIVATED BY MIDNIGHT

IMPOSSIBLY  
 motivated by midnight  
 the flyspecked abdominous female  
 indubitably tellurian  
 strolls  
                   emitting minute grins  
  
 each an intaglio.  
 Nothing  
 has also carved upon her much  
  
 too white forehead a pair of  
 eyes which mutter thickly (as one merely  
 terriculous American an instant doubts  
 the authenticity  
  
 of these antiquities—relaxing  
   hurries  
  
 elsewhere; to blow  
  
 incredible wampum



IF I HAVE MADE, MY LADY, INTRICATE

IF i have made, my lady, intricate  
imperfect various things chiefly which wrong  
your eyes(frailer than most deep dreams are frail)  
songs less firm than your body's whitest song  
upon my mind—if I have failed to snare  
the glance too shy—if through my singing slips  
the very skillful strangeness of your smile  
the keen primeval silence of your hair

—let the world say “his most wise music stole  
nothing from death”—

you only will create  
(who are so perfectly alive)my shame:  
lady through whose profound and fragile lips  
the sweet small clumsy feet of April came  
into the ragged meadow of my soul.

MY FATHER MOVED THROUGH DOOMS OF LOVE

MY father moved through dooms of love  
through sames of am through haves of give,  
singing each morning out of each night  
my father moved through depths of height

this motionless forgetful where  
turned at his glance to shining here;  
that if(so timid air is firm)  
under his eyes would stir and squirm

newly as from unburied which  
floats the first who,his april touch  
drove sleeping selves to swarm their fates  
woke dreamers to their ghostly roots

and should some why completely weep  
my father's fingers brought her sleep:  
vainly no smallest voice might cry  
for he could feel the mountains grow.

Lifting the valleys of the sea  
my father moved through griefs of joy;  
praising a forehead called the moon  
singing desire into begin

joy was his song and joy so pure  
a heart of star by him could steer  
and pure so now and now so yes  
the wrists of twilight would rejoice



keen as midsummer's keen beyond  
conceiving mind of sun will stand,  
so strictly(over utmost him  
so hugely)stood my father's dream

his flesh was flesh his blood was blood:  
no hungry man but wished him food;  
no cripple wouldn't creep one mile  
uphill to only see him smile.

Scorning the pomp of must and shall  
my father moved through dooms of feel;  
his anger was as right as rain  
his pity was as green as grain

septembering arms of year extend  
less humbly wealth to foe and friend  
than he to foolish and to wise  
offered immeasurable is

proudly and(by octobering flame  
beckoned)as earth will downward climb,  
so naked for immortal work  
his shoulders marched against the dark

his sorrow was as true as bread:  
no liar looked him in the head;  
if every friend became his foe  
he'd laugh and build a world with snow.

My father moved through theys of we,  
singing each new leaf out of each tree  
(and every child was sure that spring  
danced when she heard my father sing)

## CUMMINGS

then let men kill which cannot share,  
let blood and flesh be mud and mire,  
scheming imagine, passion willed,  
freedom a drug that's bought and sold

giving to steal and cruel kind,  
a heart to fear, to doubt a mind,  
to differ a disease of same,  
conform the pinnacle of am

though dull were all we taste as bright,  
bitter all utterly things sweet,  
maggoty minus and dumb death  
all we inherit, all bequeath

and nothing quite so least as truth  
—i say though hate were why men breathe—  
because my father lived his soul  
love is the whole and more than all



\* T . S . E L I O T \*

---

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

*And when this epistle is read among you, cause  
that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans.*

THE broad-backed hippopotamus  
Rests on his belly in the mud;  
Although he seems so firm to us  
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh-and-blood is weak and frail,  
Susceptible to nervous shock;  
While the True Church can never fail  
For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err  
In compassing material ends,  
While the True Church need never stir  
To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach  
The mango on the mango-tree;  
But fruits of pomegranate and peach  
Refresh the Church from over sea.

At mating time the hippo's voice  
Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd,  
But every week we hear rejoice  
The Church, at being one with God.

The hippopotamus's day  
Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts;  
God works in a mysterious way—  
The Church can sleep and feed at once

I saw the 'potamus take wing  
Ascending from the damp savannas.  
And quiring angels round him sing  
The praise of God, in loud hosannas.

Blood of the lamb shall wash him clean  
And him shall heavenly arms enfold,  
Among the saints he shall be seen  
Performing on a harp of gold.

He shall be washed as white as snow,  
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,  
While the True Church remains below  
Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.



GERONTION

*Thou hast nor youth nor age  
But as it were an after dinner sleep  
Dreaming of both.*

HERE I am, an old man in a dry month,  
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.  
I was neither at the hot gates  
Nor fought in the warm rain  
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,  
Bitten by flies, fought.  
My house is a decayed house,  
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,  
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,  
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London,  
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;  
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.  
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,  
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

I an old man,

A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign!"  
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,  
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year  
Came Christ the tiger.  
In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,  
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk  
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero



With caressing hands, at Limoges  
Who walked all night in the next room;

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;  
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room  
Shifting the candles; Fraulein von Kulp  
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door. Vacant  
shuttles

Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,  
An old man in a draughty house  
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is distracted  
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late  
What's not believed in, or if still believed,  
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon  
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with  
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think  
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices  
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues  
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.  
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think  
at last

We have not reached conclusion, when I  
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last  
I have not made this show purposelessly



And it is not by any concitation  
 Of the backward devils.  
 I would meet you upon this honestly.  
 I that was near your heart was removed therefrom  
 To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.  
 I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it  
 Since what is kept must be adulterated?  
 I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:  
 How should I use them for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations  
 Protract the profit, of their chilled delirium,  
 Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,  
 With pungent sauces, multiply variety  
 In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,  
 Suspend its operations, will the weevil  
 Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammell, whirled  
 Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear  
 In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy  
       straits  
 Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,  
 White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,  
 And an old man driven by the Trades  
 To a sleepy corner.

                                Tenants of the house,  
 Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

THE HOLLOW MEN

*A penny for the Old Guy*

I

WE ARE the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
Our dried voices, when  
We whisper together  
Are quiet and meaningless  
As wind in dry grass  
Or rats' feet over broken glass  
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,  
Paralyzed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed  
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom  
Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men.

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams  
In death's dream kingdom  
These do not appear:  
There, the eyes are  
Sunlight on a broken column



There, is a tree swinging  
 And voices are  
 In the wind's singing  
 More distant and more solemn  
 Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer  
 In death's dream kingdom  
 Let me also wear  
 Such deliberate disguises  
 Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves  
 In a field  
 Behaving as the wind behaves  
 No nearer—

Not that final meeting  
 In the twilight kingdom

## III

This is the dead land  
 This is cactus land  
 Here the stone images  
 Are raised, here they receive  
 The supplication of a dead man's hand  
 Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this  
 In death's other kingdom  
 Waking alone  
 At the hour when we are  
 Trembling with tenderness  
 Lips that would kiss  
 Form prayers to broken stone.

## IV

The eyes are not here  
 There are no eyes here  
 In this valley of dying stars  
 In this hollow valley  
 This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places  
 We grope together  
 And avoid speech  
 Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless  
 The eyes reappear  
 As the perpetual star  
 Multifoliate rose  
 Of death's twilight kingdom  
 The hope only  
 Of empty men.

## V

*Here we go round the prickly pear  
 Prickly pear prickly pear  
 Here we go round the prickly pear  
 At five o'clock in the morning.*

Between the idea  
 And the reality  
 Between the motion  
 And the act  
 Falls the Shadow

*For Thine is the Kingdom*



MODERN POETRY

Between the conception  
And the creation  
Between the emotion  
And the response  
Falls the Shadow

*Life is very long*

Between the desire  
And the spasm  
Between the potency  
And the existence  
Between the essence  
And the descent  
Falls the Shadow

*For Thine is the Kingdom*

For Thine is  
Life is  
For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

## From THE ROCK

**T**HE Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,  
 The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit,  
 O perpetual revolution of configured stars,  
 O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,  
 O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!  
 The endless cycle of idea and action,  
 Endless invention, endless experiment,  
 Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
 Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
 Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
 All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
 All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
 But nearness to death no nearer to God.  
 Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
 Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
 Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?  
 The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
 Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.  
 I journey to London, to the timekept City,  
 Where the River flows, with foreign flotations.  
 There I was told: we have too many churches,  
 And too few chop-houses. There I was told  
 Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the Church  
 In the place where they work, but where they spend  
     their Sundays.  
 In the City, we need no bells:  
 Let them waken the suburbs.  
 I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:  
 We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor



*MODERN POETRY*

To Hindhead, or Maidenhead.

If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the  
papers,

In industrial districts, there I was told  
Of economic laws.

In the pleasant countryside, there it seemed  
That the country now is only fit for picnics.  
And the church does not seem to be wanted  
In country or in suburb; and in the town  
Only for important weddings.

## Section II of BURNT NORTON

GARLIC and sapphires in the mud  
 Clot the bedded axle-tree.  
 The trilling wire in the blood  
 Sings below inveterate scars  
 And reconciles forgotten wars.  
 The dance along the artery  
 The circulation of the lymph  
 Are figured in the drift of stars  
 Ascend to summer in the tree  
 We move above the moving tree  
 In light upon the figured leaf  
 And hear upon the sodden floor  
 Below, the boarhound and the boar  
 Pursue their pattern as before  
 But reconciled among the stars.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless  
 Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
 But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
 Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor  
 towards,

Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
 There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
 I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.  
 And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
 The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
 And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded



## MODERN POETRY

By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,  
*Erhebung* without motion, concentration  
Without elimination, both a new world  
And the old made explicit, understood  
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,  
The resolution of its partial horror.  
Yet the enchainment of past and future  
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,  
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation  
Which flesh cannot endure.

Time past and time future

Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,  
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time time is conquered.

\* W A L T E R J A M E S T U R N E R \*

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IN TIME LIKE GLASS

IN TIME like glass the stars are set,  
And seeming-fluttering butterflies  
Are fixed fast in Time's glass net  
With mountains and with maids' bright eyes.

Above the cold Cordilleras hung  
The wingéd eagle and the Moon:  
The gold, snow-throated orchid sprung  
From gloom where peers the dark baboon:

The Himalayas' white, rapt brows;  
The jewel-eyed bear that threads their caves;  
The lush plains' lowing herds of cows;  
That Shadow entering human graves:

All these like stars in Time are set,  
They vanish but can never pass;  
The Sun that with them fades is yet  
Fast-fixed as they in Time like glass.



\* EDITH SITWELL \*

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SAID KING POMPEY

SAID King Pompey, the Emperor's ape,  
Shuddering black in his temporal cape  
Of dust: "The dust is everything—  
The heart to love and the voice to sing,  
Indianapolis,  
And the Acropolis,  
Also the hairy sky that we  
Take for a coverlet comfortably." . . .  
Said the Bishop  
Eating his ketchup—  
"There still remains Eternity  
(Swelling the diocese)—  
That elephantiasis,  
The flunkeyed and trumpeting Sea!"

MODERN POETRY

STILL FALLS THE RAIN

(*The Raids*, 1940. *Night and Dawn*)

STILL falls the Rain—  
Dark as the world of man, black as our loss—  
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails  
Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain  
With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed  
to the hammer-beat  
In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet

On the Tomb:

Still falls the Rain  
In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and  
the human brain  
Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain.

Still falls the Rain  
At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.  
Christ that each day, each night, nails there,  
have mercy on us—

On Dives and on Lazarus:

Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain—  
Still falls the blood from the Starved Man's wounded Side:  
He bears in His Heart all wounds,—those of the light  
that died,

That last faint spark  
In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad  
uncomprehending dark.



The wounds of the baited bear,—  
The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat  
On his helpless flesh . . . the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain—  
Then—O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me doune—  
See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament:  
It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree  
Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart  
That holds the fires of the world,—dark-smirched with pain  
As Caesar's laurel crown.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man  
Was once a child who among beasts has lain—  
"Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood,  
for thee."

## AN OLD WOMAN

II, AN old woman in the light of the sun,  
Wait for my Wanderer, and my upturned face  
Has all the glory of the remembering Day  
The hallowed grandeur of the primeval clay  
That knew the Flood, and suffered all the dryness  
Of the uncaring heaven, the sun its lover.

For the sun is the first lover of the world,  
Blessing all humble creatures, all life-giving,  
Blessing the end of life and the work done,  
The clean and the unclean, ores in earth, and splendours  
Within the heart of man, that second sun.

For when the first founts and deep waterways  
Of the young light flow down and lie like peace  
Upon the upturned faces of the blind  
From life, it comes to bless  
Eternity in its poor mortal dress,—  
Shining upon young lovers and old lechers  
Rising from their beds, and laying gold  
Alike in the unhopeful path of beggars  
And in the darkness of the miser's heart.  
The crookéd has a shadow light made straight,  
The shallow places gain their strength again,—  
And desert hearts, waste heavens, the barren height  
Forget that they are cold.  
The man-made chasms between man and man  
Of creeds and tongues are fill'd, the guiltless light  
Remakes all men and things in holiness.



And he who blessed the fox with a golden fleece  
 And covered earth with ears of corn like the planets  
 Bearded with thick ripe gold,  
 For the holy bread of mankind, blessed my clay:  
 For the sun cares not that I am a simple woman,  
 To him, laughing, the veins in my arms and the wrinkles  
 From work on my nursing hands are sacred as branches  
 And furrows of harvest . . . to him, the heat of the earth  
 And beat of the heart are one,—  
 Born from the energy of the world, the love  
 That keeps the Golden Ones in their place above,  
 And hearts and blood of beasts even in motion,—  
 Without which comets, sun, plants, and all living beings  
 And warmth in the inward parts of the earth would freeze.  
 And the sun does not care if I live in holiness,  
 To him, my mortal dress  
 Is sacred, part of the earth, a lump of the world  
 With my splendours, ores, impurities, and harvest,  
 Over which shines my heart, that ripening sun.

Though the dust, the shining racer, overtake me,  
 I too was a golden woman like those that walk  
 In the fields of the heavens:—but am now grown old  
 And must sit by the fire and watch the fire grow cold,  
 —A country Fate whose spool is the household task.  
 Yet still I am loved by the sun, and still am part  
 Of earth. In the evenings bringing home the workers,  
 Bringing the wanderer home and the dead child,  
 The child unborn and never to be conceived,  
 Home to the mother's breast, I sit by the fire  
 Where the seed of gold drops dead and the kettle simmers  
 With a sweet sound like that of a hive of bees,  
 And I wait for my Wanderer to come home to rest—



Covered with earth as if he had been working  
 Among the happy gardens, the holy fields  
 Where the bread of mankind ripens in the stillness.  
 Unchanged to me by death, I shall hold to my breast  
 My little child in his sleep, I shall seem the consoling  
 Earth, the mother of corn, muse of the unreturning.

Wise is the earth, consoling grief and glory,  
 The golden heroes proud as pomp of waves,—  
 Great is the earth embracing them, their graves,  
 And great is the earth's story.  
 For though the soundless wrinkles fall like snow  
 On many a golden cheek, and creeds grow old  
 And change,—man's heart, that sun,  
 Outlives all terrors shaking the old night:  
 The world's huge fevers burn and shine, turn cold,  
 Yet the heavenly bodies and young lovers burn and shine,  
 The golden lovers walk in the holy fields  
 Where the Abraham-bearded sun, the father of all things  
 Is shouting of ripeness, and the whole world of dews and  
splendours are singing

To the cradles of earth, of men, beasts, harvests, swinging  
 In the peace of God's heart. And I, the primeval clay  
 That has known earth's grief and harvest's happiness,  
 Seeing mankind's dark seed-time, come to bless,—  
 Forgive and bless all men like the holy light.



\* J E A N G A R R I G U E \*

---

FROM VENICE WAS THAT AFTERNOON

FROM Venice was that afternoon  
 Though it was our land's canal we viewed.  
 Where willows cleaved the bluish heat  
 By drooping leaf or two, gold green,  
 And every tuft of hill beyond  
 Stood bright, distinct, as if preserved  
 By glass that sealed out light but not  
 Its gold or influence.  
 And floated on the speckled stream  
 A child of brilliant innocence  
 Where on the docks of green we stood  
 Naming it love for its perfection.  
 This seemed to be . . .  
 But the current carried the leaves swiftly,  
 So flowed that child away from us,  
 So stared we sternly at the water's empty face.  
 Ah, in the greenhouse of that hour  
 Waited in the tare and sorrel  
 The mouth of fleshliness that stopped;  
 The leaves that dappled on that breast  
 The five-sensed image of our pleasure  
 Have now destroyed its lineaments.  
 For the waters of that afternoon  
 Flowed through Negation's glassy land,  
 Where in this civil, gate-closed hour

## GARRIGUE

The verges of those waters now  
Drown that joy that was our power.  
What tyranny imposed this pride  
That caused love's gift to be denied  
And our destroying features to  
Cast perpetually on its brow  
The glass accepting no leaves now?  
In rages of the intellect  
We gave to heaven abstinence  
Who said our love must issue from  
No cisterns of the ruddy sun  
But like the artifice of fountains  
Leap from cold, infertile sources.  
And our destroying features thus  
Cast from that land its beingness  
And strewn upon the green fleshed hills  
Sands of our darkening great ills.



\* WALLACE STEVENS \*

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PETER QUINCE AT THE CLAVIER

I

JUST as my fingers on these keys  
Make music, so the self-same sounds  
On my spirit make a music too.

Music is feeling then, not sound;  
And thus it is that what I feel,  
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
Is music. It is like the strain  
Waked in the elders by Susanna:

Of a green evening, clear and warm,  
She bathed in her still garden, while  
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their being throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

II

In the green evening, clear and warm,  
Susanna lay.  
She searched  
The touch of springs,

STEVENS

And found  
Concealed imaginings.  
She sighed  
For so much melody.

Upon the bank she stood  
In the cool  
Of spent emotions.  
She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,  
Still quavering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night.  
She turned—  
A cymbal clashed,  
And roaring horns.

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,  
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side:

And as they whispered, the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain.



Anon their lamps' uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then the simpering Byzantines,  
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—  
The fitful tracing of a portal;  
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.  
So evenings die, in their green going,  
A wave, interminably flowing.

So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of Winter, done repenting.  
So maidens die to the auroral  
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings  
Of those white elders; but, escaping,  
Left only Death's ironic scraping.  
Now in its immortality, it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory,  
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

THE MECHANICAL OPTIMIST

A LADY dying of diabetes  
Listened to the radio,  
Catching the lesser dithyrambs.  
So heaven collects its bleating lambs.

Her useless bracelets fondly fluttered,  
Faddling the melodic swirls,  
The idea of god no longer sputtered  
At the roots of her indifferent curls.

The idea of the Alps grew large,  
Not yet, however, a thing to die in.  
It seemed serener just to die,  
To float off on the floweriest barge.

Accompanied by the exegesis  
Of familiar things in a cheerful voice,  
Like the night before Christmas and all the carols  
Dying lady, rejoice, rejoice!



\* H A R T C R A N E \*

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SUNDAY MORNING APPLES

*To William Sommer, Painter*

THE leaves will fall again sometime and fill  
The fleece of nature with those purposes  
That are your rich and faithful strength of line.

But now there are challenges to spring  
In that ripe nude with head

reared

Into a realm of swords, her purple shadow  
Bursting on the winter of the world  
From whiteness that cries defiance to the snow.

A boy runs with a dog before the sun, straddling  
Spontaneities that form their independent orbits,  
Their own perennials of light  
In the valley where you live

(called Brandywine).

I have seen the apples there that toss you secrets.—  
Beloved apples of seasonable madness  
That feed your inquiries with aerial wine.

Put them again beside a pitcher with a knife.  
And poise them full and ready for explosion—  
The apples, Bill, the apples!

EMBLEMS OF CONDUCT

BY A peninsula the wanderer sat and sketched  
The uneven valley graves. While the apostle gave  
Alms to the meek the volcano burst  
With sulphur and aureate rocks . . .  
For joy rides in stupendous coverings  
Luring the living into spiritual gates.

Orators follow the universe  
And radio the complete laws to the people.  
The apostle conveys thought through discipline.  
Bowls and cups fill historians with adorations,—  
Dull lips commemorating spiritual gates.

The wanderer later chose this spot of rest  
Where marble clouds support the sea  
And where was finally borne a chosen hero.  
By that time summer and smoke were past.  
Dolphins still played, arching the horizons,  
But only to build memories of spiritual gates.



VOYAGES II

AND yet this great wink of eternity,  
Of rimless floods, unfettered leewardings,  
Samite sheeted and processioned where  
Her undinal vast belly moonward bends,  
Laughing the wrapt inflections of our love;

Take this Sea, whose diapason knells  
On scrolls of silver snowy sentences,  
The sceptred terror of whose sessions rends  
As her demeanors motion well or ill,  
All but the pieties of lovers' hands.

And onward, as bells off San Salvador  
Salute the crocus lustres of the stars,  
In these poinsettia meadows of her tides,—  
Adagios of islands, O my Prodigal,  
Complete the dark confessions her veins spell.

Mark how her turning shoulders wind the hours,  
And hasten while her penniless rich palms  
Pass superscription of bent foam and wave,—  
Hasten, while they are true,—sleep, death, desire,  
Close round one instant in one floating flower.

Bind us in time, O Seasons clear, and awe.  
O minstrel galleons of Carib fire,  
Bequeath us to no earthly shore until  
Is answered in the vortex of our grave  
The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise.



CRANE

From THE BRIDGE

The River

*. . . and past  
the din and slogans  
of the year—*

**S**TICK your patent name on a signboard  
brother—all over—going west—young man  
Tintex—Japalac—Certain-teed Overalls ads  
and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped  
in the guaranteed corner—see Bert Williams what?  
Minstrels when you steal a chicken just  
save me the wing for if it isn't  
Erie it ain't for miles around a  
Mazda—and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas

a Ediford—and whistling down the tracks  
a headlight rushing with the sound—can you  
imagine—while an EXpress makes time like  
**SCIENCE—COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST**  
**RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE**  
**NORTHPOLE**  
**WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT**  
**STONES OR**  
**WIRES OR EVEN RUNning** brooks connecting ears  
and no more sermons windows flashing roar  
breathtaking—as you like it . . . eh?

So the 20th Century—so  
whizzed the Limited—roared by and left  
three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly



MODERN POETRY

watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slipping  
gimleted and neatly out of sight.

\*

*to those  
whose addresses  
are never near*

The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas  
Loped under wires that span the mountain stream.  
Keen instruments, strung to a vast precision  
Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream.  
But some men take their liquor slow—and count  
—Though they'll confess no rosary nor clue—  
The river's minute by the far brook's year.  
Under a world of whistles, wires and steam  
Caboose-like they go ruminating through  
Ohio, Indiana—blind baggage—  
To Cheyenne tagging . . . Maybe Kalamazoo.

Time's rendings, time's blendings they construe  
As final reckonings of fire and snow;  
Strange bird-wit, like the elemental gist  
Of unwall'd winds they offer, singing low  
*My Old Kentucky Home* and *Casey Jones*,  
*Some Sunny Day*. I heard a road-gang chanting so.  
And afterwards, who had a colt's eyes—one said,  
“Jesus! Oh I remember watermelon days!” And sped  
High in a cloud of merriment, recalled  
“—And when my Aunt Sally Simpson smiled,” he  
drawled—

“It was almost Louisiana, long ago.”  
“There's no place like Booneville though, Buddy,”  
One said, excising a last burr from his vest,  
“—For early troutling.” Then peering in the can,



—CRANE

“—But I kept on the tracks.” Possessed, resigned,  
He trod the fire down pensively and grinned,  
Spreading dry shingles of a beard. . . .

Behind

My father's cannery works I used to see  
Rail-squatters ranged in nomad raillery,  
The ancient men—wifeless or runaway  
Hobo-trekkers that forever search  
An empire wilderness of freight and rails.  
Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,  
Holding to childhood like some termless play.  
John, Jake or Charley, hopping the slow freight  
—Memphis to Tallahassee—riding the rods,  
Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods.

*but who have  
touched her, knowing  
her without name*

Yet they touch something like a key perhaps.  
From pole to pole across the hills, the states  
—They know a body under the wide rain;  
Youngsters with eyes like fjords, old reprobates  
With racetrack jargon,—dotting immensity  
They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast  
Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue—  
Is past the valley-sleepers, south or west.  
—As I have trod the rumorous midnights, too,

And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame  
(O Nights' that brought me to her body bare!)  
Have dreamed beyond the print that bound her name.  
Trains sounding the long blizzards out—I heard  
Wail into distances I knew were hers.  
Papooes crying on the wind's long mane



## MODERN POETRY

Screamed redskin dynasties that fled the brain,  
—Dead echoes! But I knew her body there,  
Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,  
And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair.

*nor the myths  
of her fathers . . .*

Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain,  
The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools  
Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain  
And re-descend with corn from querulous crows.  
Such pilferings make up their timeless eatage,  
Propitiate them for their timber torn  
By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage!  
They doze now, below axe and powder horn.

And Pullman breakfasters glide glistening steel  
From tunnel into field—iron strides the dew—  
Straddles the hill, a dance of wheel on wheel.  
You have a half-hour's wait at Siskiyou,  
Or stay the night and take the next train through.  
Southward, near Cairo passing, you can see  
The Ohio merging,—borne down Tennessee;  
And if it's summer and the sun's in dusk  
Maybe the breeze will lift the River's musk  
—As though the waters breathed that you might know  
*Memphis Johnny, Steamboat Bill, Missouri Joe.*  
Oh, lean from the window, if the train slows down,  
As though you touched hands with some ancient clown,  
—A little while gaze absently below  
And hum *Deep River* with them while they go.

Yes, turn again and sniff once more—look see,  
O Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority—



## CRANE

Hitch up your pants and crunch another quid,  
For you, too, feed the River timelessly.  
And few evade full measure of their fate;  
Always they smile out eerily what they seem.  
I could believe he joked at heaven's gate—  
Dan Midland—jolted from the cold brake-beam.

Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite,  
Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow—  
They win no frontier by their wayward plight,  
But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow.

You will not hear it as the sea; even stone  
Is not more hushed by gravity . . . But slow,  
As loth to take more tribute—sliding prone  
Like one whose eyes were buried long ago

The River, spreading, flows—and spends your dream.  
What are you, lost within this tideless spell?  
You are your father's father, and the stream—  
A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.

Damp tonnage and alluvial march of days—  
Nights turbid, vascular with silted shale  
And roots surrendered down of moraine clays:  
The Mississippi drinks the farthest dale.

O quarrying passion, undertowed sunlight!  
The basalt surface drags a jungle grace  
Ochreous and lynx-barred in lengthening might;  
Patience! and you shall reach the biding place!

Over De Soto's bones the freighted floors  
Throb past the City storied of three thrones.



*MODERN POETRY*

Down two more turns the Mississippi pours  
(Anon tall ironsides up from salt lagoons)

And flows within itself, heaps itself free.  
All fades but one thin skyline 'round . . . Ahead  
No embrace opens but the stinging sea;  
The River lifts itself from its long bed,

Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow  
Tortured with history, its one will—flow!  
—The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow,  
Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below.

## PURGATORIO

MY COUNTRY, O my land, my friends—  
Am I apart—here from you in a land  
Where all your gas lights—faces—sputum gleam  
Like something left, forsaken—here am I—  
And are these stars—the high plateau—the scents  
Of Eden and the dangerous tree—are these  
The landscape of confession—and if confession  
So absolution? Wake pines—but pines wake here.  
I dream the too-keen cider—the too-soft snow.  
Where are the bayonets that the scorpion may not grow?  
Here quakes of earth make houses fall—  
And all my countrymen I see rush toward one stall;  
Exile is thus purgatory—not such as Dante built,

But rather like a blanket than a quilt,  
And I have no decision—is it green or brown  
That I prefer to country or to town?  
I am unraveled, umbilical anew,  
As ring the church bells here in Mexico—  
(They ring too obdurately here to heed my call)  
And what hours they forget to chime I'll know,  
As one whose altitude at one time, was not so.



\* JOHN CROWE RANSOM \*

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HERE LIES A LADY

HERE lies a lady of beauty and high degree.  
Of chills and fever she died, of fever and chills,  
The delight of her husband, her aunts, an infant of  
three,  
And of medicos marvelling sweetly on her ills.

For either she burned, and her confident eyes would  
blaze,  
And her fingers fly in a manner to puzzle their heads—  
What was she making? Why, nothing; she sat in a maze  
Of old scraps of laces, snipped into curious shreds—

Or this would pass, and the light of her fire decline  
Till she lay discouraged and cold as a thin stalk white  
and blown,  
And would not open her eyes, to kisses, to wine;  
The sixth of these states was her last; the cold settled  
down.

Sweet ladies, long may ye bloom, and toughly I hope ye  
may thole,  
But was she not lucky? In flowers and lace and mourning,  
In love and great honour we bade God rest her soul  
After six little spaces of chill, and six of burning.



PRELUDE LVI

RIMBAUD and Verlaine, precious pair of poets,  
Genius in both (but what is genius?) playing  
Chess on a marble table at an inn  
With chestnut blossom falling in blond beer  
And on their hair and between knight and bishop—  
Sunlight squared between them on the chess-board  
Cirrus in heaven, and a squeal of music  
Blown from the leathern door of Ste. Sulpice—

Discussing, between moves, iamb and spondee  
Anacoluthon and the open vowel  
God the great peacock with his angel peacocks  
And his dependent peacocks the bright stars:  
Disputing too of fate as Plato loved it,  
Or Sophocles, who hated and admired,  
Or Socrates, who loved and was amused:

Verlaine puts down his pawn upon a leaf  
And closes his long eyes, which are dishonest,  
And says 'Rimbaud, there is one thing to do:  
We must take rhetoric, and wring its neck! . . .'  
Rimbaud considers gravely, moves his Queen;  
And then removes himself to Timbuctoo.

And Verlaine dead,—with all his jades and mauves;  
And Rimbaud dead in Marseilles with a vision,



*MODERN POETRY*

His leg cut off, as once before his heart;  
And all reported by a later lackey,  
Whose virtue is his tardiness in time.

Let us describe the evening as it is:—  
The stars disposed in heaven as they are:  
Verlaine and Shakespeare rotting, where they rot,  
Rimbaud remembered, and too soon forgot;

Order in all things, logic in the dark;  
Arrangement in the atom and the spark;  
Time in the heart and sequence in the brain—

Such as destroyed Rimbaud and fooled Verlaine  
And let us then take godhead by the neck—  
And strangle it, and with it, rhetoric.

IDIOT

THE idiot greens the meadows with his eyes,  
The meadow creeps implacable and still;  
A dog barks, the hammock swings, he lies.  
One two three the cows bulge on the hill.

Motion which is not time erects snowdrifts  
While sister's hand sieves waterfalls of lace.  
With a palm fan closer than death he lifts  
The Ozarks and tilted seas across his face.

In the long sunset where impatient sound  
Strips niggers to a multiple of backs  
Flies yield their heat, magnolias drench the ground  
With Appomattox! The shadows lie in stacks.

The julep glass weaves echoes in Jim's kinks  
While ashy Jim puts murmurs in the day:  
Now in the idiot's heart a chamber stinks  
Of dead asters, as the potter's field of May.

All evening the marsh is a slick pool  
Where dream wild hares, witch hazel, pretty girls.  
"Up from the important picnic of a fool  
Those rotted asters!" Eddy on eddy swirls



MODERN POETRY

The innocent mansion of a panther's heart!  
It crumbles, tick-tick time drags it in  
And now his arteries lag and now they start  
Reverence with the frigid gusts of sin—

The stillness pelts the eye, assaults the hair;  
A beech sticks out a branch to warm the stars,  
A lightning-bug jerks angles in the air,  
Diving. "I am the captain of new wars!"

The dusk runs down the lane driven like hail;  
Far off a precise whistle is escheat  
To the dark; and then the towering weak and pale  
Covers his eyes with memory like a sheet.



THE MILITARY HARPIST

**S**TRANGELY assorted, the shape of song and the bloody man.

Under the harp's gilt shoulder and rainlike strings,  
Prawn-eyed, with prawnlike bristle, well-waxed moustache,  
With long tight cavalry legs, and the spurred boot  
Ready upon the swell, the Old Sweat waits.

Now dies, and dies hard, the stupid, well-relished fortissimo,  
Wood-wind alone inviting the liquid tone,  
The voice of the holy and uncontending, the harp.

Ceasing to ruminate interracial fornications,  
He raises his hands, and his wicked old mug is David's,  
Pastoral, rapt, the king and the poet in innocence,  
Singing Saul in himself asleep, and the ancient Devil  
Clean out of countenance, as with an army of angels.

He is now where his bunion has no existence,  
Breathing an atmosphere free of pipeclay and swearing,  
He wears the starched nightshirt of the hereafter, his halo  
Is plain manly brass with a permanent polish,  
Requiring no oily rag and no Soldier's Friend.

His place is with the beloved poet of Israel,  
With the wandering minnesinger and the loves of Provence,



With Blondel footsore and heartsore, the voice in the darkness  
Crying like beauty bereaved beneath many a donjon,  
O Richard! O king! where is the lion of England!  
With Howell, Llewellyn, and far in the feral north  
With the savage fame of the hero in glen and in ben,  
At the morning discourse of saints in the island Eire,  
And at nameless doings in the stone-circle, the dreadful grove.

Thus far into the dark do I delve for his likeness:  
He harps at the Druid sacrifice, where the golden string  
Sings to the golden knife and the victim's shriek.

Strangely assorted, the shape of song and the bloody man.

From THE DESTROYERS

*Speech of the First Sentry*

NOW all things melt and shift in the moon's light.  
The walls before you alter. The landscape  
Alters. Familiar things  
Take unfamiliar shape.  
The building you knew at noon of such a height  
Will shrink by dusk. The very street  
That led you to your house begins to change,  
And as you walk the thing within your mind  
Takes form before the echo of your feet.  
And there, behind the door you knew you locked yourself  
Twist the key and find  
A dead man in his winding sheet.

The knowledge you had at morning by the night  
Will cope with nothing. The measured mile  
Between two landmarks stretches and contracts.  
Time no longer fixed  
To the actuated shadow on a dial  
Will break and waver like your image  
In wind-blown water.

All laws have broken  
According to some law you sense, but worse  
Than none because you cannot understand,



Seeing it only as unappeasable curse  
Making you stranger to your own hand.  
All problems crossed—no sum  
You learned at school will quite work out;  
Nothing constant but the power  
To prove upon the world your every doubt.  
It is the moment of the whirlpool, moment  
Of that abyss where all things stream.  
O you who sleep tonight within this city!  
Think now of order, for in what's to come  
You'll learn how 'be' and 'seem'  
May interchange along with 'plan' and 'chance'  
And hear above your heads destruction dance  
On the curved roof of the universe as a drum.

## From IN TIME OF FOREIGN WAR

ALL summer long I felt it in the air  
 As if those armies on another continent  
 Shifting into position to prepare  
 Demolition of an age—the tent  
 Pitched in the public park by antiaircraft,  
 The guns unlimbered, the tanks set, the brief  
 Flights of reconnaissance, the fortress shaft  
 Mined and occupied—set here the leaf  
 Fluttering on a windless day, the dawn  
 To come on me working with a whispered  
 “Wait!”

A blurring of all previous lines drawn,  
 An inability to concentrate,  
 So strained the ear with listening; in the lap  
 Of heat waves on horizon the dull hour  
 Unfolded like a flower, like a trap  
 Whose center was a cone prolonged in space.  
 Unconscious expectancy of some one word—  
 An inattention marked on every face  
 As if someone had spoken and they half-heard.

\*

The age descends: dictator, president,  
 Premier, priest, or vacant formal king  
 Pass now like masks as hollow, arrogant,  
 Another voice takes over, mastering  
 Distraction. Do you believe in the sequence  
 Guided by phrases, the sentences  
 Falling from the lips of the men in power?  
 Attribute anarchy? Forget; the deeper sense is  
 Constrained by the forces let loose in this hour.



A time that harped on mass and weight, that dreamed  
Its revolutions in a million bellies,  
A time that clung in shipwreck to what seemed  
And sank on instabilities, its eyes  
Ravished by the meaningless appearance,  
That edited its ideals by one use—  
Its popular faith, art and thought by chance  
Compacted and all together an abuse  
Of the soul's truth—now when  
It most needs just and integrated men  
Self-mastering, self-aware, finds it has run  
Bewilderingly barren in the stock,  
And has, instead, such effigies as on  
The platform of a medieval clock  
Creak and revolve: the jerky, leaden shells  
Traverse the hours to the sound of bells.

A time, now, like a globe, where underground  
Or overhead whispers reverberate  
And footfalls from the dead past sound  
Upon the future with the ring of plate;  
Where premonition sees in field of strife  
Tomorrow's pattern like a fixture of stars  
Where tortured fatalism forgets that life  
Is not restrained by any system's bars  
Nor any formulation of the mind,  
That living is continual overflow—  
That only what is dead can be defined.

Therefore—before the gongs let go—  
Remember now that the most precious ward  
Of every individual, his right  
To his own evolution, here you guard  
That neither mob nor tyrant may command.

*MACLIESH*

And this a promise, only by your hand  
A process: a progression of fulfillments.

Remember here where whispers dislocate  
Among our cities still-far-off events  
And everywhere, decision is so great,  
An inner silence into which we sense  
Other figures enter—a measured tread  
Re-echoes. Under hearing, out of sight,  
We are surrounded by the honored dead;  
Their forms patrol the arches of the night.

\*



SPIRIT: A SPIRAL: A SPIRE

SPIRIT: a spiral: a spire:  
S The immanent Lotus blooming from the mire.  
What has the downpour of our guts and blood  
And two milleniums of western thought  
Raging on act and object ever brought  
But suffocation in the intellectual mud?

From fifty motionless cedars in the light  
Of darkness lifting up the curved midnight  
Depend the pin-point, plate-shaped galaxies  
Like cones: a contemplation: a Here and Now  
Obliterates the individual bough,  
Whose roots embrace all seasons and all seas.

The playground empties science has defiled:  
Let that murderous, alienated child  
Urinating ruin, be put to bed.  
The Patriarch resolved all questioning  
By silence when a bird began to sing.  
Has anyone spoken? Has anything been said?

TOMBSTONE WITH CHERUBIM

NO NOTICE in the papers,  
Only a voice over the telephone  
Saying she was dead, casually,  
remarkably definite.

Somebody whispered syphilis—  
a sentimental lie.

Somebody spoke of her  
(rococo) a Florentine olive tree  
that should have twined (O unmistakably!)  
around the person of a football-captain stock-broker  
asleep  
Upon Miami sands.

She shrieked at poverty.  
divorced from silks, furs, and patented nickel-plated  
limousines.

She loved relaxed security,  
sleeping with men occasionally  
as it were exotic dreams

and rich meaningless words  
draping the tender portions of her body:

Hello, Marie  
you should have gone out like a row of mazda lamps  
smashed with a crowbar.

Even this epitaph,  
true enough for a beautiful girl



## *MODERN POETRY*

pacing with unforgettable ease  
down Michigan Boulevard one April morning,  
does not contain the facts.

The facts were these:

She died in Lesbian serenity  
neither hot nor cold  
until the chaste limbs stiffened.

Disconnect the telephone;

cut the wires.

## SALVOS FOR RANDOLPH BOURNE

O BITTERNESS never spoken, the death mask etched in  
silver,  
the dark limbs rolled in lead where the shallow grave  
conceals  
despair: the image of a large head, forward, devouring  
the collarbone. No general in brass over it and no  
conquering angel kneels.

## II

**This was the end:**

There were no firing squads  
No City Hall Nathan Hale with a bronze cord at his  
throat  
Speaking of lives and his country where a hundred mil-  
lion lives  
rose, wavered, shattered like an invisible sea coiling  
against a rock (no longer there) but sunken  
into a shore line of weeds and sand.

Only a small room and a million words to be written  
before midnight  
against poverty and idiot death like the gray face of  
Emerson  
fading in New England winter twilight; the hard face  
vanishing  
in snow, the passionately soft words issuing from the  
mouth—  
O listen to the rock, the oracle no longer there!



## MODERN POETRY

### III

To be the last American, an embryo coiled in a test tube,  
To be a fixed and paralytic smile cocked upward to the  
clouds,  
To see friends and enemies depart (around the corner)  
Their sticks and smart fedoras bright in sunlight,  
To be or not to be Hamlet, the Prince of Wales,  
or last week's *New Republic*;  
to be death delicately walking between chimney pots on  
Eighth Street,  
possibly this is best to be  
or not to be.



THE BURNING WHEEL

THEY followed the course of heaven as before  
Trojan in smoky armor westward fled  
Disastrous walls and on his shoulder bore  
A dotard recollection had made mad,

Depraved by years, Anchises: on the strong  
Tall bronze upborne, small sack of impotence;  
Yet still he wore the look of one who young  
Had closed with love in cloudy radiance.

So the discoverers when they wading came  
From shallow ships and climbed the wooded shores:  
They saw the west, a sky of falling flame,  
And by the stream savage ambassadors.

O happy, brave and vast adventure! Where  
Each day the sun beat rivers of new gold;  
The wild grape ripened, springs reflected fear;  
The wild deer fled; the bright snake danger coiled.

They, too, the stalwart conquerors of space,  
Each on his shoulders wore a wise delirium  
Of memory and age: ghostly embrace  
Of fathers slanted toward a western tomb.



*MODERN POETRY*

A hundred and a hundred years they stayed  
Aloft, until they were as light as autumn  
Shells of locusts. Where then were they laid?  
And in what wilderness oblivion?

THIS DIM AND PTOLEMAIC MAN

FOR forty years, for forty-one,  
Sparing the profits of the sun,  
This farmer piled his meagre hoard  
To buy at last a rattly Ford.

Now crouched on a scared smile he feels  
Motion spurt beneath his heels,  
Rheumatically intent shifts gears,  
Unloosing joints of rustic years.

Morning light obscures the stars,  
He swerves avoiding other cars,  
Wheels with the road, does not discern  
He eastward goes at every turn,

Nor how his aged limbs are hurled  
Through all the motions of the world,  
How wild past farms, past ricks, past trees,  
He perishes toward Hercules.



\* E . B . WHITE \*

---

I PAINT WHAT I SEE  
*A Ballad of Artistic Integrity*

WHAT do you paint, when you paint a wall?"  
Said John D.'s grandson Nelson.  
"Do you paint just anything there at all?  
"Will there be any doves, or a tree in fall?  
"Or a hunting scene, like an English hall?"

*"I paint what I see," said Rivera.*

"What are the colors you use when you paint?"  
Said John D.'s grandson Nelson.  
"Do you use any red in the beard of a saint?  
"If you do, is it terribly red, or faint?  
"Do you use any blue? Is it Prussian?"

*"I paint what I paint," said Rivera.*

"Whose is that head that I see on my wall?"  
Said John D.'s grandson Nelson.  
"Is it anyone's head whom we know, at all?  
"A Rensselaer, or a Saltonstall?  
"Is it Franklin D.? Is it Mordaunt Hall?  
"Or is it the head of a Russian?"

*"I paint what I think," said Rivera*

*"I paint what I paint, I paint what I see,*

*"I paint what I think," said Rivera,*  
*"And the thing that is dearest in life to me*  
*"In a bourgeois hall is Integrity;*

*"However . . .*

*"I'll take out a couple of people drinkin'*  
*"And put in a picture of Abraham Lincoln,*  
*"I could even give you McCormick's reaper*  
*"And still not make my art much cheaper.*  
*"But the head of Lenin has got to stay*  
*"Or my friends will give me the bird today*  
*"The bird, the bird, forever."*

*"It's not good taste in a man like me,"*

*Said John D.'s grandson Nelson,*

*"To question an artist's integrity*  
*"Or mention a practical thing like a fee,*  
*"But I know what I like to a large degree*  
*"Though art I hate to hamper;*  
*"For twenty-one thousand conservative bucks*  
*"You painted a radical. I say shucks,*  
*"I never could rent the offices—*  
*"The capitalistic offices.*  
*"For this, as you know, is a public hall*  
*"And people want doves, or a tree in fall,*  
*"And though your art I dislike to hamper,*  
*"I owe a little to God and Gramper,*  
*"And after all,*  
*"It's my wall . . ."*

*"We'll see if it is," said Rivera.*



\* F R E D E R I C P R O K O S C H \*

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THE CONSPIRATORS

AND if the dead, and the dead  
Of spirit now join, and in their horrifying ritual  
Proceed till at last with oriental grace  
End their concluding dance with the candles guttering,  
The cymbals sobbing, the wind harassing the curtains,  
The chill from the flood embracing the golden stairway.  
The scent devoured and the bowls blown clean of  
incense:

Ah then, farewell, sweet northern music;  
No longer the flight of the mind across the continents,  
The dazzling flight of our words across the tempestuous  
Black, or the firelit recital of a distant battle.

No. All that we loved is lost, if the intricate  
Languor of recollected centuries  
Descends in its terrible sweetness on our limbs.  
No shot will echo; no fire; no agonizing  
Cry will resound in the city's thickets: only,  
The ivy falling gently across the bridges,  
The larches piercing the roofs, the reclining steeples,  
The cellars rich with the agony of the reptiles,  
The contemplative worms, the victorious rodents,  
And at last, the climax entrancingly serene,  
The inconclusive note drowned on the ascendant:

*PROKOSCH*

Our lovely shapes in marble still shine through the  
greenery,

Our exquisite silver bones still glide with the glaciers  
That split our familiar hills, still fall with the avalanche  
And weaving their vast wing's thunder over the Indies  
The birds, the birds, sob for the time of man.



\* ARCHIBALD MACLEISH \*

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THE TOO-LATE BORN

WE TOO, we too, descending once again  
The hills of our own land, we too have heard  
Far off—Ah, que ce cor a longue haleine—  
The horn of Roland in the passages of Spain,  
The first, the second blast, the failing third,  
And with the third turned back and climbed once more  
The steep road southward, and heard faint the sound  
Of swords, of horses, the disastrous war,  
And crossed the dark defile at last, and found  
At Roncevaux upon the darkening plain  
The dead against the dead and on the silent ground  
The silent slain—

INVOCATION TO THE SOCIAL MUSE

SEÑORA it is true the Greeks are dead:

It is true also that we here are Americans:  
That we use the machines: that a sight of the god is  
unusual:

That more people have more thoughts: that there are

Progress and science and tractors and revolutions and  
Marx and the wars more antiseptic and murderous  
And music in every home: there is also Hoover:

Does the lady suggest we should write it out in The  
Word?

Does Madame recall our responsibilities? We are  
Whores Fraulein: poets Fraulein are persons of

Known vocation following troops: they must sleep with  
Stragglers from either prince and of both views:  
The rules permit them to further the business of neither:

It is also strictly forbidden to mix in maneuvers:  
Those that infringe are inflated with praise on the  
plazas—

Their bones are resultantly afterwards found under  
newspapers:

Preferring life with the sons to death with the fathers  
We also doubt on the record whether the sons  
Will still be shouting around with the same huzzas—



*MODERN POETRY*

For we hope Lady to live to lie with the youngest:  
There are only a handful of things a man likes  
Generation to generation hungry or

Well fed: the earth's one: life's  
One: Mister Morgan is not one:

There is nothing worse for our trade than to be in style:

He that goes naked goes farther at last than another:  
Wrap the bard in a flag or a school and they'll jimmy his  
Door down and be thick in his bed—for a month:

(Who recalls the address now of the Imagists?)  
But the naked man has always his own nakedness:  
People remember forever his live limbs:

They may drive him out of the camps but one will take  
him:  
They may stop his tongue on his teeth with a rope's  
argument—  
He will lie in a house and be warm when they are  
shaking:

Besides Tovarishch how to embrace an army?  
How to take to one's chamber a million souls?  
How to conceive in the name of a column of marchers?

The things of the poet are done to a man alone  
As the things of love are done—or of death when he  
hears the  
Step withdraw on the stair and the clock tick only:

Neither his class nor his kind nor his trade may come  
near him

There where he lies on his left arm and will die:  
Nor his class nor his kind nor his trade when the blood  
is jeering

And his knee's in the soft of the bed where his love lies:

I remind you Barinya the life of the poet is hard—  
A hardy life with a boot as quick as a fiver:

Is it just to demand of us also to bear arms?



OIL PAINTING OF THE ARTIST AS THE ARTIST

**T**HE plump Mr. Pl'f is washing his hands of America:  
The plump Mr. Pl'f is in ochre with such hair:

America is in blue-black-grey-green-sandcolor:  
America is a continent—many lands:

The plump Mr. Pl'f is washing his hands of America:  
He is pictured at Pau on the place and his eyes glaring:

He thinks of himself as an exile from all this:  
As an émigré from his own time into history—

(History being an empty house without owners  
A practical man may get in by the privy stones—

The dead are excellent hosts: they have no objections—  
And once in he can nail the knob on the next one

Living the life of a classic in bad air with  
Himself for the Past and his face in the glass for Pos-  
terity)

The Cinquecento is nothing at all like Nome  
Or Natchez or Wounded Knee or the Shenandoah:

Your vulgarity Tennessee: your violence Texas:  
The rocks under your fields Ohio Connecticut:

Your clay Missouri your clay: you have driven him out:  
You have shadowed his life Appalachians purple moun-  
tains:

There is much too much of your flowing Mississippi:  
He prefers a tidier stream with a terrace for trippers and

Cypresses mentioned in Horace or Henry James:  
He prefers a country where everything carries the name  
of a

Countess or real king or an actual palace or  
Something in Prose and the stock prices all in Italian:

There is more shade for an artist under a fig  
Than under the whole damn range (he finds) of the  
Big Horns



POLE STAR FOR THIS YEAR

WHERE the wheel of light is turned:  
Where the axle of the night is  
Turned: is motionless: where holds  
And has held ancient sureness always:

Where of faring men the eyes  
At oar bench at the rising bow  
Have seen—torn shrouds between—the Wain  
And that star's changelessness: not changing:

There upon that intent star:  
Trust of wandering men: of truth  
The most reminding witness: we  
Fix our eyes also: waylost: the wanderers:

We too turn now to that star:  
We too in whose trustless hearts  
All truth alters and the lights  
Of earth are out now turn to that star:

Liberty of man and mind  
That once was mind's necessity  
And made the West blaze up has burned  
To bloody embers and the lamp's out:

Hope that was a noble flame  
Has fanned to violence and feeds  
On cities and the flesh of men  
And chokes where unclean smoke defiles it:

*MACLEISH*

Even the small spark of pride  
That taught the tyrant once is dark  
Where gunfire rules the starving street  
And justice cheats the dead of honor:

Liberty and pride and hope  
And every guide-mark of the mind  
That led our blindness once has vanished.  
This star will not. Love's star will not.

Love that has beheld the face  
A man has with a man's eyes in it  
Bloody from the slugger's blows  
Or heard the cold child cry for hunger—

Love that listens where the good:  
The virtuous: the men of faith:  
Proclaim the paradise on earth  
And murder starve and burn to make it—

Love that cannot either sleep  
Or keep rich music in the ear  
Or lose itself for the wild beat  
The anger in the blood makes raging—

Love that hardens into hate—  
Love like hatred and as bright—  
Love is that one waking light  
That leads now when all others darken.





## \* PART FOUR \*

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*THESE are the live,  
Not silhouettes or dead men.  
That dull murmur is their tread on the street:  
Those brass quavers are their shouts.  
Here is the wind blowing through the crowded square.  
Here is the violence and secret change.  
And these are figures of life beneath the sea.  
These are the lovely women  
And the exhilarations that die.  
Here is a stone lying on the sidewalk  
In the shadow of the wall.  
Hey? What saith the noble poet now,  
Drawing his hand across his brow?  
Claude, is the divine afflatus upon you?  
Hey? Hey Claude?  
Here are a million taxi drivers, social prophets,  
The costume for an attitude,  
A back-stage shriek,  
The heat and speed of the earth.*



*Here is a statue of Burns.*

*There is the modern moon.*

*That song is the latest dance.*

*Hey? Of what doth the noble poet brood  
In a tragic mood?*

KENNETH FEARING

THE SHOW

*We have fallen in the dreams the ever-living  
Breathe on the tarnished mirror of the world,  
And then smooth out with ivory hands and sigh*

W. B. YEATS

MY SOUL looked down from a vague height with Death,  
As unremembering how I rose or why,  
And saw a sad land, weak with sweats of dearth,  
Gray, cratered like the moon with hollow woe,  
And pitted with great pocks and scabs of plagues.

Across its beard, that horror of harsh wire,  
There moved thin caterpillars, slowly uncoiled.  
It seemed they pushed themselves to be as plugs  
Of ditches, where they writhed and shrivelled, killed.

By them had slimy paths been trailed and scraped  
Round myriad warts that might be little hills.

From gloom's last dregs these long-strung creatures crept  
And vanished out of dawn down hidden holes.

(And smell came up from those foul openings  
As out of mouths, or deep wounds deepening.)



On dithering feet upgathered, more and more,  
Brown strings, towards strings of gray, with bristling  
spines,  
All migrants from green fields, intent on mire.

Those that were gray, of more abundant spawns,  
Ramped on the rest and ate them and were eaten.

I saw their bitten backs curve, loop, and straighten,  
I watched those agonies curl, lift, and flatten.

Whereat, in terror what that sight might mean,  
I reeled and shivered earthward like a feather.

And Death fell with me, like a deepening moan.  
And He, picking a manner of worm, which half had hid  
Its bruises in the earth, but crawled no further,  
Showed me its feet, the feet of many men,  
And the fresh-severed head of it, my head.

## ARMS AND THE BOY

**L**ET the boy try along this bayonet-blade  
How cold steel is, and keen with hunger of blood;  
Blue with all malice, like a madman's flash;  
And thinly drawn with famishing for flesh.

Lend him to stroke these blind, blunt bullet-heads  
Which long to nuzzle in the hearts of lads,  
Or give him cartridges of fine zinc teeth,  
Sharp with the sharpness of grief and death.

For his teeth seem for laughing round an apple.  
There lurk no claws behind his fingers supple;  
And god will grow no talons at his heels,  
Nor antlers through the thickness of his curls.



## STRANGE MEETING

**I**T SEEMED that out of battle I escaped  
 Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped  
 Through granites which titanic wars had groined.  
 Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,  
 Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.  
 Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared  
 With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,  
 Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.  
 And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,  
 By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.  
 With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;  
 Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,  
 And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.  
 "Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."  
 "None," said the other, "save the undone years,  
 The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,  
 Was my life also; I went hunting wild  
 After the wildest beauty in the world,  
 Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,  
 But mocks the steady running of the hour,  
 And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.  
 For by my glee might many men have laughed,  
 And of my weeping something had been left,  
 Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,  
 The pity of war, the pity war distilled.  
 Now men will go content with what we spoiled.  
 Or discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.  
 They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,  
 None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.



Courage was mine, and I had mystery,  
Wisdom was mine and I had mastery;  
To miss the march of this retreating world  
Into vain citadels that are not walled.  
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-  
wheels

I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,  
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.  
I would have poured my spirit without stint  
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.  
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.  
I am the enemy you killed, my friend.  
I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned  
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.  
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.  
Let us sleep now. . . ."



## GREATER LOVE

RED lips are not so red  
 As the stained stones kissed by the English dead.  
 Kindness of wooed and wooer  
 Seems shame to their love pure.  
 O Love, your eyes lose lure  
 When I behold eyes blinded in my stead!

Your slender attitude  
 Trembles not exquisite like limbs knife-skewed,  
 Rolling and rolling there  
 Where God seems not to care;  
 Till the fierce Love they bear  
 Cramps them in death's extreme decrepitude.

Your voice sings not so soft,—  
 Though even as wind murmuring through rafters  
 loft,—

Your dear voice is not dear,  
 Gentle, and evening clear,  
 As theirs whom none now hear,  
 Now earth has stopped their piteous mouths that  
 coughed.

Heart, you were never hot,  
 Nor large, nor full like hearts made great with shot;  
 And though your hand be pale,  
 Paler are all which trail  
 Your cross through flame and hail:  
 Weep, you may weep, for you may touch them not.

## SONG OF SONGS

SING me at morn but only with your laugh;  
Even as Spring that laugheth into leaf;  
Even as Love that laugheth after Life.

Sing me but only with your speech all day,  
As voluble leaflets do; let viols die;  
The least word of your lips is melody!

Sing me at eve but only with your sigh!  
Like lifting seas it solaceth; breathe so,  
Slowly and low, the sense that no songs say.

Sing me at midnight with your mumurous heart!  
Let youth's immortal-moaning chords be heard  
Throbbing through you, and sobbing, unsubdued.



## \* KENNETH FEARING \*

## DIRGE

1-2-3 was the number he played but today the number  
came 3-2-1;

bought his Carbide at 30 and it went to 29; had the  
favorite at Bowie but the track was slow—

O, executive type, would you like to drive a floating  
power, knee-action, silk-upholstered six? Wed a  
Hollywood star? Shoot the course in 58? Draw to  
the ace, king, jack?

O, fellow with a will who won't take no, watch out  
for three cigarettes on the same, single match; O,  
democratic voter born in August under Mars, be-  
ware of liquidated rails—

Denouement to denouement, he took a personal pride in  
the certain, certain way he lived his own, private  
life,

but nevertheless, they shut off his gas; nevertheless,  
the bank foreclosed; nevertheless, the landlord  
called; nevertheless, the radio broke,

And twelve o'clock arrived just once too often,  
just the same he wore one grey tweed suit, bought one  
straw hat, drank one straight Scotch, walked one

*FEARING*

short step, took one long look, drew one deep  
breath,  
just one too many,

And wow he died as wow he lived,  
going whop to the office and blooie home to sleep and  
biff got married and bam had children and oof got  
fired,  
zowie did he live and zowie did he die,

With who the hell are you at the corner of his casket,  
and where the hell we going on the right hand  
silver knob, and who the hell cares walking second  
from the end with an American Beauty wreath  
from why the hell not,

Very much missed by the circulation staff of the New  
York Evening Post; deeply, deeply mourned by the  
B.M.T.,

Wham, Mr. Roosevelt; pow, Sears Roebuck; awk, big  
dipper; bop, summer rain;  
bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong, Mr., bong.



\* EDMUND WILSON \*

THE OMELET OF A. MACLEISH

I

AND the mist: and the rain on West Rock: and the  
wind steady:

There were elms in that place: and graven inflexible  
laws:

Men of Yale: and the shudder of Tap Day: the need for  
a man to make headway

Winning a way through the door in the windowless  
walls:

And the poems that came easy and sweet with a blurring  
of Masefield

(The same that I later denied): a young man smooth  
but raw

*Mac-  
Leish  
breaks  
an egg  
for his  
omelet.*

Eliot alarmed me at first: but my later abasement:  
And the clean sun of France: and the freakish but  
beautiful fashion:

Striped bathhouses bright on the sand: *Anabase* and *The  
Waste Land*:

These and the *Cantos* of Pound: O how they came pat!  
Nimble at other men's arts how I picked up the trick  
of it:

Rode it reposed on it drifted away on it: passing

*He puts  
plovers'  
eggs and  
truffles  
into his  
omelet.*



WILSON

Shores that lay dim in clear air: and the cries of  
affliction  
Suave in somniferous rhythms: there was rain there and  
moons:  
Leaves falling: and all of a flawless and hollow felicity:

In that land there were summer and autumn and  
nighttime and noon  
But all seemed alike: and the new-polished planets by  
Einstein:  
And a wind out of Valéry's graveyard but it never  
blew anything loose:

*He slips  
in a few  
prizes  
for  
philos-  
ophers.*

And the questions and questions  
questioning  
What am I? O

What shall I remember?  
O my people  
a pensive dismay  
What have I left unsaid?  
Till the hearer cried:

"If only MacLeish could remember if only could say  
it!" . . .  
And young girls came out: they were innocent strong  
in the tendons  
Hungry for all that was new: and hearing their eyelids  
were hazy with

*The  
omelet  
becomes  
a na-  
tional  
institu-  
tion and  
gets into  
Fanny  
Farmer.*

Tears and delight: and the campuses brown in Novem-  
ber:  
Ha but white shirt fronts pink faces: the prizes won:  
The celluloid tower with bold intonations defended:



And the mean tang of Cummings turned saltless and  
sleek on the tongue:  
And a Dante gone limp: and a shimmer and musical  
sound  
That gleamed in the void and evoked approbation and  
wonder

*He ex-  
periments  
with a  
new kind  
of pepper-  
corn.*

That the poet need not be a madman or even a bounder.

II

And at last I drew close to a land dark with fortifica-  
tions:  
Men shrieking outlandish reproaches till all my blood  
tingled:  
It was ragged and harsh there: they hated: heart hor-  
ribly quaked in me:

*He seems  
likely to  
lose his  
invest-  
ment in  
his  
omelet.*

Then I thought "I have staved off the pricking of many  
a sting:  
These perchance I may placate too": I put in at that  
place:  
I met them with scorn and good-natured agreement  
mingled:

Their fierce cries of "Aesthete!" and "Fascist!": and  
like them I railed at the  
Bankers and builders of railroads: I said "Social  
Credit":  
(He's a tough lad under the verse mister all the same!):

And the Polacks and Dagoes and Hunkies undoubtedly  
dead:  
And behold these savage and sybarite-baiting strangers  
Had many among them like me well-mannered well-fed

*He is  
obliged to  
reopen  
his ome-  
let and*



WILSON

Bubbling over with schoolboy heroics: their line had  
been changing:

*put a  
little  
garlic in.*

And long in that plentiful land I dwelt honored in peace:  
And then schoolboys from Britain came over us flying  
like angels:

Them too I courted: I labored to roughen the sweet  
To stiffen the wilt of a style that seemed lax in that  
land:

*He is  
doomed  
to go on  
doctoring  
his  
omelet.*

A starch of Greek tragedy: stark Anglo-Saxon the beat  
of it:

Stock-market talk: still my numbers as mawkishly ran:  
(Señora, I could go on like this forever:  
It is a strange thing to be an American):

I was wired for sound as I started again down the river:  
And my colons went out on the air to the clang of a  
gong:

O when shall I ring with the perilous pain and the fever?

A clean and clever lad

who is doing

his best

to get on. . . .

1938



\* ROBERT PENN WARREN \*

---

PONDY WOODS

THE buzzards over Pondy Woods  
Achieve the blue tense altitudes,  
Black figments that the woods release,  
Obscenity in form and grace,  
Drifting high through the pure sunshine  
Till the sun in gold decline.

Big Jim Todd was a slick black buck  
Laying low in the mud and muck  
Of Pondy Woods when the sun went down  
In gold, and the buzzards tilted down  
A windless vortex to the black-gum trees  
To sit along the quiet boughs,  
Devout and swollen, at their ease.

By the buzzard roost Big Jim Todd  
Listened for hoofs on the corduroy road  
Or for the foul and sucking sound  
A man's foot makes on the marshy ground.  
Past midnight, when the moccasin  
Slipped from the log and, trailing in  
Its obscured water, broke  
The dark algae, one lean bird spoke.

"Nigger, you went this afternoon  
For your Saturday spree at the Blue Goose saloon,



So you've got on your Sunday clothes,  
 On your big splay feet got patent-leather shoes.  
 But a buzzard can smell the thing you've done;  
 The posse will get you—run, nigger, run—  
 There's a fellow behind you with a big shot-gun.  
 Nigger, nigger, you'll sweat cold sweat  
 In your patent-leather shoes and Sunday clothes  
 When down your track the steeljacket goes  
 Mean and whimpering over the wheat.

"Nigger, your breed ain't metaphysical."  
 The buzzard coughed. His words fell  
 In the darkness, mystic and ambrosial.  
 "But we maintain our ancient rite,  
 Eat the gods by day and prophesy by night.  
 We swing against the sky and wait;  
 You seize the hour, more passionate  
 Than strong, and strive with time to die—  
 With Time, the beaked tribe's astute ally.

"The Jew-boy died. The Syrian vulture swung  
 Remotely above the cross whereon he hung  
 From dinner-time to supper-time, and all  
 The people gathered there watched him until  
 The lean brown chest no longer stirred,  
 Then idly watched the slow majestic bird  
 That in the last sun above the twilit hill  
 Gleamed for a moment at the height and slid  
 Down the hot wind and in the darkness hid.  
 Nigger, regard the circumstance of breath:  
*Non omnis moriar*, the poet saith."

Pedantic, the bird clacked its grey beak,  
 With a Tennessee accent to the classic phrase;



Jim understood, and was about to speak,  
But the buzzard drooped one wing and filmed the eyes.

At dawn unto the Sabbath wheat he came,  
That gave to the dew its faithless yellow flame  
From kindly loam in recollection of  
The fires that in the brutal rock once strove.  
To the ripe wheat fields he came at dawn.  
Northward the printed smoke stood quiet above  
The distant cabins of Squiggtown.  
A train's far whistle blew and drifted away  
Coldly; lucid and thin the morning lay  
Along the farms, and here no sound  
Touched the sweet earth miraculously stilled.  
Then down the damp and sudden wood there belled  
The musical white-throated hound.

In Pondy Woods in the August drouth  
Lurk fever and the cottonmouth.  
And buzzards over Pondy Woods  
Achieve the blue tense altitudes,  
Drifting high in the pure sunshine  
Till the sun in gold decline;  
Then golden and hieratic through  
The night their eyes burn two by two.

\* L O U I S M A C N E I C E \*

---

## MUSEUMS

**M**USEUMS offer us, running from among the 'buses,  
A centrally heated refuge, parquet floors and sarcophaguses,  
Into whose tall fake porches we hurry without a sound  
Like a beetle under a brick that lies, useless on the ground.  
Warmed and cajoled by the silence, the cowed cipher revives,  
Mirrors himself in the cases of pots, paces himself by marble  
lives,  
Makes believe it was he that was the glory that was Rome,  
Soft on his cheek the nimbus of other people's martyrdom,  
And then returns to the street, his mind an arena where  
sprawls  
Any number of consumptive Keatses and dying Gauls.



THEIR LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

*(With W. H. Auden)*

WE, WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN and Louis MacNeice,  
Brought up to speak and write the English tongue  
Being led in the eighteenth year of the Western Peace  
To the duck-shaped mountainous island with the Danish  
King,  
At Melgraseyri in Isafjördardjup  
Under the eaves of a glacier, considering

The autumns, personal and public, which already creep  
Through city-crowded Europe, and those in want  
Who soon must look up at the winter sky and weep.

Do set down this, our will and testament:  
Believing man responsible for what he does,  
Sole author of his terror and his content.

★

We leave to Stanley Baldwin, our beloved P.M.,  
The false front of Lincoln Cathedral, and a school  
Of Empire poets. As for his Cabinet, to them

We leave their National character and strength of will.  
To Winston Churchill Ballinrobe's dry harbour  
And Randolph, un bel pezzo, in a codicil.

To Sir Maurice Hankey for his secretarial labour  
The Vicar of Bray's discretion; and to Lord Lloyd  
We leave a flag-day and a cavalry sabre.



MACNEICE

To Vickers the Gran Chaco (for agents must be paid),  
The Balkan Conscience and the sleepless night we think  
The inevitable diseases of their dangerous trade.

\*

Item, to I. A. Richards who like a mouse  
Nibbles linguistics with the cerebral tooth  
We leave a quiet evening in a boarding-house

Where he may study the facts of birth and death  
In their inexplicable oddity  
And put a shilling in the slot for brains and breath.

And Julian Huxley we leave an ant, a bee,  
An axolotl and Aldous; item, to Bert-  
rand Russell we leave belief in God (D.V.)

Item, we leave a bottle of invalid port  
To Lady Astor; item, the Parthenon  
On the Calton Hill to Basil de Selincourt.

Item, we leave the phases of the moon  
To Mr. Yeats to rock his bardic sleep;  
And to Dr. Cyril Norwood a new spittoon;

And Tubby Clayton can have some gingerpop;  
And General O'Duffy can take the Harp That Once  
Started and somehow was never able to stop.

We leave a mens sana qui mal y pense  
To the Public Schools of England, plus Ian Hay  
That the sons of gents may have La Plus Bonne Chance.

\*



*MODERN POETRY*

And to Sir Oswald (please forgive the stench  
Which taints our parchment from that purulent name)  
We leave a rather unpleasant word in French.

★

As for the parts of our bodies in this will

We allot them here as follows: to the Home  
For Lost Dogs and Cats our livers and lights,  
And our behinds to the Birmingham Hippodrome.

And our four eyes which cannot see for nuts  
We leave to all big-game hunters and to all  
Apprentices to murder at the butts;

Our feet to hikers when their own feet fail;  
To all escapists our Islands of Langerhans;  
And to Imperial Chemicals a pail

Of what in us would otherwise join the drains:  
The Watch Committee can have our noses and  
The British Association can have our brains:

Item, our ears, apt for the slightest sound,  
We leave those Statesmen who happen to be debarred  
From hearing how the wheels of State run round. . . .

★

To all the dictators who look so bold and fresh  
The midnight hours, the soft wind from the sweeping  
wing  
Of madness, and the intolerable tightening of the mesh



*MACNEICE*

Of history. We leave their marvellous native tongue  
To Englishmen, and for our intelligent island pray  
That to her virtuous beauties by all poets sung

She add at last an honest foreign policy.  
For her oppressed, injured, insulted, and weak  
The logic and the passion proper for victory.

We leave our age the quite considerable spark  
Of private love and goodness which never leaves  
An age, however awful, in the utter dark.

We leave the unconceived and unborn lives  
A closer approximation to real happiness  
Than has been reached by us, our neighbours or their  
wives.

To those who by office or from inclination use  
Authority, a knowledge of their own misdeed  
And all the hate that coercion must produce.

For the lost who from self-hatred cannot hide,  
Such temporary refuge or engines of escape  
From pain as Chance and Mercy can provide

And to the good who know how wide the gulf, how deep  
Between Ideal and Real, who being good have felt  
The final temptation to withdraw, sit down and weep,

We pray the power to take upon themselves the guilt  
Of human action, though still as ready to confess  
The imperfection of what can and must be built,  
The wish and power to act, forgive, and bless.



PRAYER BEFORE BIRTH

I AM not yet born; O hear me.  
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the  
club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.  
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,  
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,  
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me  
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk  
to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light  
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me  
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words  
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me,  
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,  
my life when they murder by means of my  
hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me  
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when  
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains  
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white  
waves call me to folly and the desert calls  
me to doom and the beggar refuses  
my gift and my children curse me.

*MACNEICE*

I am not yet born; O hear me,  
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God  
come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me  
With strength against those who would freeze my  
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,  
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with  
one face, a thing, and against all those  
who would dissipate my entirety, would  
blow me like thistledown hither and  
thither or hither and thither  
like water held in the  
hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.  
Otherwise kill me.



\* C . D A Y L E W I S \*

---

TEMPT ME NO MORE; FOR I

TEMPT me no more; for I  
Have known the lightning's hour,  
The poet's inward pride,  
The certainty of power.

Bayonets are closing round.  
I shrink; yet I must wring  
A living from despair  
And out of steel a song.

Though song, though breath be short,  
I'll share not the disgrace  
Of those that ran away  
Or never left the base.

Comrades, my tongue can speak  
No comfortable words,  
Calls to a forlorn hope,  
Gives work and not rewards.

Oh keep the sickle sharp  
And follow still the plough:  
Others may reap, though some  
See not the winter through.

*LEWIS*

Father, who endest all,  
Pity our broken sleep;  
For we lie down with tears  
And waken but to weep.

And if our blood alone  
Will melt this iron earth,  
Take it. It is well spent  
Easing a saviour's birth.



\* J A M E S A G E E \*

---

RAPID TRANSIT

SQUEALING under city stone  
The millions on the millions run,  
Every one a life alone,  
Every one a soul undone:

There all the poisons of the heart  
Branch and abound like whirling brooks  
And there through every useless art  
Like spoiled meats on a butcher's hooks

Pour forth upon their frightful kind  
The faces of each ruined child:  
The wrecked demeanors of the mind  
That now is tamed, and once was wild.

SUNDAY: OUTSKIRTS OF KNOXVILLE, TENN.

THERE, in the earliest and chary spring, the dogwood flowers.

Unharnessed in the friendly sunday air  
By the red brambles, on the river bluffs,  
Clerks and their choices pair.

Thrive by, not near, washed all away by shrub and juniper,  
The ford v eight, racing the chevrolet.

They cannot trouble her:

Her breasts, helped open from the afforded lace,  
Lie like a peaceful lake;  
And on his mouth she breaks her gentleness:

Oh, wave them awake!

They are not of the birds. Such innocence  
Brings us to break us only.  
Theirs are not happy words.  
We that are human cannot hope.  
Our tenderest joys oblige us most.  
No chain so cuts the bone; and sweetest silk most shrewdly  
strangles.

How this must end, that now please love were ended,  
In kitchens, bedfights, silences, women's-pages,  
Sickness of heart before goldlettered doors,  
Stale flesh, hard collars, agony in antiseptic corridors,  
Spankings, remonstrances, fishing trips, orange juice,



Policies, incapacities, a chevrolet,  
Scorn of their children, kind contempt exchanged,  
Shouted corrections of missed syllables,  
Hot water bags, gallstones, falls down stairs,  
Old fashioned christmases, suspicions of theft,  
Arrangements with morticians taken care of by sons in law,  
Small rooms beneath the gables of brick bungalows,  
The tumbler smashed, the glance between daughter and husband,  
The empty body in the lonely bed  
And, in the empty concrete porch, blown ash  
Grandchildren wandering the betraying sun

Now, on the winsome crumbling shelves of the horror  
God show, God blind these children.

MILLIONS ARE LEARNING HOW

FROM now on kill America out of your mind.  
America is dead these hundred years.  
You've better work to do, and things to find:  
Waste neither time nor tears.

See, rather, all the millions and all the land  
Mutually shapen as a child of love.  
As individual as a hand  
And to be thought highly of.

The wrinkling mountains stay: the master stream  
Still soils the Gulf a hundred amber miles:  
A people as a creature in a dream  
Not yet awakened, smiles.

Those poisons which were low along the air  
Like mists, like mists are lifting. Even now,  
Thousands are breathing health in, here and there:  
Millions are learning how.



\* O G D E N N A S H \*

---

Three Rhymes from **HARD LINES**

1. **LINES IN DISPRAISE OF DISPRAISE**

I HEREBY bequeath to the Bide-a-Wee Home all people  
 who have statistics to prove that a human  
 Is nothing but a combination of iron and water and  
 potash and albumen.

That may very well be the truth  
 But it's just like saying that a cocktail is nothing  
 but ice and gin and vermouth.

People who go around analyzing  
 Are indeed very tanalizing.

They always want to get at the bottom  
 Of everything from spring to ottom.

They can't just look at a Rembrandt or a Bartolozzi  
 And say, Boy! that's pretty hozzi-tozzi!

No, they have to break it up into its component parts  
 And reconstruct it with blueprints and charts.

My idea is that while after looking around me and even  
 at me

I may not be proud of being a human  
 I object to having attention called to my iron and water  
 and potash and albumen.

In the first place, it's undignified,  
 And in the second place, nothing by it is signified.  
 Because it isn't potash etcetera that makes people  
 Republicans or Democrats or Ghibellines or Guelphs



NASH

It's the natural perversity of the people themselves.  
No, no, you old analysts, away with the whole kit and  
kaboodle of you.  
I wouldn't even make mincemeat to give to a poodle of  
you.

2. SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

I think that I shall never see  
A billboard lovely as a tree.  
Perhaps, unless the billboards fall,  
I'll never see a tree at all.

3. AUTRES BÊTES, AUTRES MOEURS

(i)

The fish, when he's exposed to air  
Can show no trace of savoir faire  
But in the sea regains his balance  
And exploits all his manly talents;  
The chastest of the vertebrates,  
He never even sees his mates,  
But when they've finished, he appears  
And O.K.'s all their bright ideas.

(ii)

The turtle lives 'twixt plated decks  
Which practically conceal its sex.  
I think it clever of the turtle  
In such a fix to be so fertile.



\* S T E P H E N S P E N D E R \*

---

THE EXPRESS

AFTER the first powerful plain manifesto  
 The black statement of pistons, without more fuss  
 But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.  
 Without bowing and with restrained unconcern  
 She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,  
 The gasworks and at last the heavy page  
 Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.  
 Beyond the town there lies the open country  
 Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,  
 The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.  
 It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low  
 Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness—  
 The song of her whistle screaming at curves,  
 Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.  
 And always light, aerial, underneath  
 Goes the elate metre of her wheels.  
 Steaming through metal landscape on her lines  
 She plunges new eras of wild happiness  
 Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves  
 And parallels clean like the steel of guns.  
 At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,  
 Beyond the crest of the world she reaches night  
 Where only a low streamline brightness

*SPENDER*

**Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is white.  
Ah, like a comet through flame she moves entranced  
Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough  
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.**



I THINK CONTINUALLY OF THOSE WHO  
WERE TRULY GREAT

I THINK continually of those who were truly great.  
Who, from the womb, remembered the soul's history  
Through corridors of light where the hours are suns  
Endless and singing. Whose lovely ambition  
Was that their lips, still touched with fire,  
Should tell of the Spirit clothed from head to foot in  
song.

And who hoarded from the Spring branches  
The desires falling across their bodies like blossoms.

What is precious is never to forget  
The essential delight of the blood drawn from ageless  
springs

Breaking through rocks in worlds before our earth.  
Never to deny its pleasure in the morning simple light  
Nor its grave evening demand for love.  
Never to allow gradually the traffic to smother  
With noise and fog the flowering of the spirit.

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields  
See how these names are fêted by the waving grass  
And by the streamers of white cloud  
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.  
The names of those who in their lives fought for life  
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.  
Born of the sun they travelled a short while towards the  
sun,  
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.



THE FUNERAL

DEATH is another milestone on their way.  
With laughter on their lips and with winds blowing  
round them

They record simply  
How this one excelled all others in making driving belts.

This is festivity, it is the time of statistics  
When they record what one unit contributed:  
They are glad as they lay him back in the earth  
And thank him for what he gave them.

They walk home remembering the straining red flags,  
And with pennons of song still fluttering through their  
blood

They speak of the world state  
With its towns like brain-centres and its pulsing arteries.

They think how one life hums, revolves and toils,  
One cog in a golden and singing hive:  
Like spark from fire, its task happily achieved,  
It falls away quietly.

No more are they haunted by the individual grief  
Nor the crocodile tears of European genius,  
The decline of culture  
Mourned by scholars who dream of the ghosts of Greek  
boys.



OH YOUNG MEN OH YOUNG COMRADES

**O**H YOUNG men oh young comrades  
it is too late now to stay in those houses  
your fathers built where they built you to build to breed  
money on money it is too late  
to make or even to count what has been made  
Count rather those fabulous possessions  
which begin with your body and your fiery soul:—  
the hairs on your head the muscles extending  
in ranges with their lakes across your limbs  
Count your eyes as jewels and your valued sex  
then count the sun and the innumerable coined light  
sparkling on waves and spangled under trees  
It is too late to stay in great houses where the ghosts are  
prisoned  
—those ladies like flies perfect in amber  
those financiers like fossils of bones in coal.  
Oh comrades, step beautifully from the solid wall  
advance to rebuild and sleep with friend on hill  
advance to rebel and remember what you have  
no ghost ever had, immured in his hall.



SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

*To Cecil Day Lewis*

*We fly through a night of stars  
Whose remote frozen tongues speak  
A language of mirrors, mineral Greek  
Glittering across space, each to each—  
O dream of Venus and Mars,  
In a hollow dome of extinct life, far far far from our wars.*

I

UNDER their nakedness, they are naked still.  
Within the mind, myths, and the stars, expose  
The frailty of their skulls. A new dawn blows  
Away the external structure of their will.

The Universe, by inches, minutes, fills  
Their tongues and eyes, where name and image show,  
With words and pictures. The days overflow  
Minds in which world is conscious. And Time kills.

Voyaging through their universal fate,  
All of these pulsing knots of thought and breath  
Join in one thought, though all are separate.  
Through aeons and through cities, underneath  
Distraction of sword and temple, they await  
The lonely naked drama of their death.

II

You were born, must die; were loved, must love.  
Born naked; were clothed; yet naked walk  
Under your naked dress; naked thoughts move  
Hollow, hollow, within clock-talk, star-talk.

Time and space shall on you feed;



Upon your purple eyes, their distance;  
Upon your heart, their clawing need;  
Upon your death, lost, lost significance.

There is one fate beneath those ignorances  
Into whose separate knots of flesh you're split,  
Homunculus of skin and thought and breath;  
Chalk-white, gay, pranking skeleton, it  
Strums on your gut such songs and merry dances  
Amor, o solitude, o seldom death.

III

Since we are what we are, what shall we be  
But what we are? We are, we have,  
Six feet and seventy years, to see  
The light, and then release it for the grave.

We are not worlds, no, nor infinity,  
We have no claims on stones, except to prove  
In the invention of the human city  
Our selves, our breath, our death, our love.

The tower we build soars like an arrow  
From the earth's rim into the sky's,  
Upwards and downwards in that blazing pond  
Climbing and diving from our life, to narrow  
The gap between the world shut in the eyes  
And the receding space of light beyond.

IV

That which divides, joins again in belief.  
We see the invisible knots which bind  
The ends of life, where sight at last is blind  
And the eye becomes the leaden color of grief.

Each circular life gnaws at its little leaf  
Of here and now. Each is bound into one kind.



## SPENDER

Only, nature outside, within the mind,  
Tempts with its tree each one to be a thief.

Mortals are not aeons, they are not space,  
Not empires, not maps; they have only  
Bodies and graves. Yet all the past, the race,  
Knowledge and memory, are unfurled  
Within each separate head, grown lonely  
With time, growing, shedding, the world.

### V

The immortal spirit is that single ghost  
Of all the time, incarnate in our time,  
Which through our breathing skeletons must climb  
Within our supple skin to be engrossed.

Without that ghost within, our lives are lost  
Fragments, haunting the earth's rim.  
Unless we will it live, that ghost pines, dim,  
Lost in our lives; its death, our death, the cost.

One being, of past, present, futurity,  
Seeks within these many-headed wills  
To uncage the flame-winged dove in the stone city.  
Shut in ourselves, each blind beaked subject kills  
His neighbor and himself, and shuts out pity  
For that one soaring spirit which fulfills.

### VI

I am that witness through whom the whole  
Knows it exists. Within my coils of blood,  
Whispering under sleep, unfurls the flood  
Of stars, battles, the dark and distant pole.

All that I am I am not. The cold stone  
Unfolds an angel for me. On my dreams ride  
The timeless legends. The stars outside



Glitter under my ribs. Being all, I am alone.

I who say I call that word I  
Which is the mirror in which things see  
Nothing except themselves. I die.  
The things, and the word, still will be.  
Upon this word reflections of stars lie,  
And that which passes, passes away, is I.

VII

Outside, the external star-tall mountains gleam  
Where changeless changing past and future lock  
Their fusing streams into an age of rock  
Against whose day my days but shadows seem.

Within my shut skull, flows a historied stream  
Of myths, fears, crimes, that chiselling stock  
Which hews my limbs out of the daylight block  
And makes my lives the slaves of their dead dream.

The Universe, the dead, humanity, fill  
Each world-wide generation with the sigh  
That breathes the pattern of their will.  
Their sensitive perceiving witness, I,  
See mirrored in my consciousness, the ill  
Chameleon-colored fool of words, who'll die.

VIII

Transparent light,  
Piercing through eyes, through mind, through windows,  
Of the body, the will, the house: Your knife  
Gleams over interlocked stones, where power's  
Fused barriers enclose  
Ruinous malicious life  
Of internecine, fratricidal strife.  
Your fate, bright



*SPENDER*

With lightning stamped from the dark hours,  
Will strike down, unlock, expose  
The entrails, fouled will, piteous heart  
Of the leaders, the populace, those  
Shut in their mind's own night,  
Lost and lolling among the shadows.

To the unborn lend your healing powers  
To the son returning from the sword-bright wars  
Restore his winged steed.  
Assist him to rise, demonstrate what towers,  
What aeroplanes, what roads, your fluent grace needs.  
Tell him he does inherit  
The vague past focussed clearly in the present,  
Life-stream he must guide through the city  
Forward to futurity.  
Tell him he does inhabit  
His body your body, his spirit your spirit,  
And let your purposes his purposes  
Unfold through buds of him their flowers;  
Through walls he builds and towers  
O be your will transparent,  
Make his hands shine with your burning roses.



\* E U N I C E C L A R K \*

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THE PEOPLE HAS NO OBITUARY

DEATH cannot surprise us who are driven  
 Century after century through seas of men.  
 No drought of life is here, no person  
 Too rare to lose, who cannot be found again.

Partings are not final. No self is past changing  
 And replacing. Grains from a deep bin,  
 Male and female we are broadcast. Without ritual  
 Seed is severed from flower, kith from kin.

Death does not frighten us who read the notices  
 Of thousands dying. We have won  
 Only a number by our borning, and another  
 Long number when the sand has run.

Death is a word the rich love, keening  
 Over the precise career of a lost one.  
 We are the seed spent lavishly in cities:  
 We wander, mourning all but naming none.

Men, women in cities, multitudes, millions,  
 Receding, increasing without annual plan,  
 The people is the jungle-soil of heroes, flourishing  
 When death dries out the special planted man.



THE DEATH OF THE CRANEMAN

HAPPENED like this: it was hot as hell  
That afternoon, sand, stone dust, the sun,  
We were in the mountains.  
Drinking-water was by the gasoline drum  
We were all drinking like fish that day.  
He must have come down from the crane  
For a drink I guess, a cigarette  
Might have done it, blew it bang up, that drum,  
Like dynamite been dropped in it.  
We came running down from the mountains.  
The blacksmith got to him first: gasoline  
Had made a bonfire of him, and we shouted  
Craneman! Craneman! with the wops talking  
Their language, and nobody knowing his name.  
Standing there you could see him, a flame  
Lighter and yellower than the sunlight,  
And burning, hands and feet, his hair on fire,  
Getting up from the ground, standing there,  
Yelling out of the fire, flame shooting white  
In the sunlight: Lemme alone! Lemme alone!  
I'm all right!

Well, we get him here and here he dies.  
And that's where we buried him out there,  
In the goldenrod beyond them pines,



It's a Potter's Field and nobody'd care.  
We dug the grave with our drills and hands.  
You got to bury a guy somewhere.  
Funny I thought as I looked at him  
Blackened, with a pair of holes for eyes,  
You bury a stiff and there he lies,  
And Christ only knows where he come from  
And whether there's kids somewhere or a dame,  
We buried him like he came in this world,  
A stiff, naked, without a name.

From THE AIRMEN

1. LEONARDO'S DREAM

THE Bird flies westward.  
Its shadow lengthens  
To the shape of a man  
Asking a question.  
The man turns to stone  
And the earth grows hard.

The stalk's sap dries  
And the parchment shrivels.  
The stones are loosened.  
The earth begins to crack.  
Though Fall is everywhere  
The Bird still flies.

Then the Bird's flight ceases.  
The tombs are built  
While the dying live  
In the shadow of Winter;  
Man is gone,  
But the crowd increases.

Then comes the Word  
Of the Absent Lover:



*MODERN POETRY*

The candle in the crypt.  
The slant-eyed face,  
The promise and the curse:  
The worship of the Bird.

But the Bird flies on.  
As the ritual congeals  
And the vaulted stonework  
Writhes in boredom,  
And the worshippers envy  
His aimless freedom,

Comes the birth of Spring.  
Born of that fury  
In the love of Beauty,  
The saint assumes the flesh,  
The prince his ermine,  
And the scholars sing.

To the cradle of the boy  
The Great Bird comes  
On a summer morning:  
Covering the sky,  
The Mother and the Lover,  
To make and to destroy.

Wed to art, made half  
By terror and by love,  
The child's divided soul  
Exceeds the well man's wholeness.  
But to justify the Bird  
He must sacrifice himself.

2. THE BATTLE OF ANGLIARI

Around a blot of ink  
Tinctured with chrome and pink,  
A jaw begins to sink,  
    A face to grow;  
Wide as the mouth of Hell,  
Bright as a bursting shell,  
Horror assumes a yell  
    The shape of O.

Tangled in anger's grip  
Cleaver and saber rip  
At ankle, neck and hip,  
    While on the ground  
One who has lost his hand  
Struggles in vain to stand  
Kicking at comrade, and  
    Dog licking wound.

Caught in that froth of fright  
Steeds and their riders bite,  
The very steel hold tight  
    In splintering teeth.  
Yet, tender, almost gay,  
Over the whole scene play  
Shadows in green and gray  
    And the wind's breath.

There, where the battle's run,  
Mother bends over son,  
All that she gave him gone,  
    And seems to smile:



## MODERN POETRY

Expression that sufficed  
Lisa, the Virgin, Christ,  
Serene in secret tryst,  
—Not love, not guile!

But something so compact  
Of every mortal act,  
Attackers and attacked,  
One understands  
Peace that is more than joy;  
Love that cannot destroy;  
Smile not of maid or boy  
But Everyman's.

### 3. TRIAL BY FLIGHT

*"From the mountain that bears its  
name, the famous Bird will make its  
flight, filling the whole world with  
amazement, all records with its fame,  
and bringing eternal glory to its  
birthplace . . ."*

—LEONARDO

Poised for that glory on the peak,  
The Will is strong, the Flesh is weak;  
The breastbone narrow; secular brain  
Inexpert in the hurricane;  
Not any length of arm or thigh  
Sure refuge in the wind-wide sky;  
Nor any armor proof for shock  
Of body's plunge on upthrust rock.  
He stands alone. Though outward-gazing  
The fire of his two eyes, blazing,  
Smolders within. He has forgot

Mind's precepts: "Do this . . ." "That do not . . ."

*Item:* "Substance exerts the pressure  
Of air against that substance." "Measure  
The footstep of a springing man."  
"Construct a circular, bladed fan."

*Item:* "No strip of spring-steel wound  
To drum will lift man off the ground."—  
But in the heat of his defiance,  
Abandoning the old reliance  
On tested truth and measured fact  
And calculation—vows to act.

Bitterly, lest to human eyes  
The secret of his project rise,  
Provide a target for their laughing,  
Or, worse than that, a common plaything,  
He carries nightly, bit by bit,  
The wings, the seat where he will sit,  
The wired pedals and the fuselage,  
A glass-balled inclination gauge,  
A parachute with roof of silk,  
And last (why not?) a jar of milk  
Under his seat, and on his lap  
A European landing map.

He who had written: "Man will fly  
Securely as he soars most high";  
He who had warned that hills with trees  
And valleys swept by cross-draughts, ease  
The hardiest herons from their course—  
With silk for membranes, arms for oars,



MODERN POETRY

And fiercely at his back the breeze,  
Exchanges for Experience, Force.

But wait! Suddenly as he kneels  
To slip the blocks that hold the wheels,  
Behind a cloudbank overhead  
The moon slides out, all round and red;  
"Only the sun's great light conceals,"  
He thinks, "the fact that it is dead;  
And what if we deny such light  
As mind vouchsafes, before the night  
Covers us up? My body found  
Crushed in the framework on the ground  
—That is no great catastrophe,  
For men must die, and I must die.  
But should men say: 'He had less love  
Than pride, less skill than spite; here's proof  
That man was never meant to fly  
And science is but vanity?'"

Knowing his safety will insure  
No search of that forgotten spur  
Under the cliff's head; that below  
Only the curious bird will know  
The secret that each Spring lays bare  
Age after age in melted snow:  
Abandoned manhood, lost renown,  
The wings in which he might have flown—  
With blinding tears upon his eyes,  
And clutching at his throat, despair,  
He kicks the blocks.

It falls . . . It flies!

Twice circling in the tenuous air

*RODMAN*

And vanishes. But at that crash  
Of crumbling tail-work, splintering ash,  
Lifting his head, he wildly cries.  
For in the wreckage settling there  
The passion that pursued him dies.



\* OSCAR WILLIAMS \*

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 THE SUBWAY

UNDER the church's lawn, in the land of electric clocks,  
 The subway train is plunging into the lungs of the rocks:  
 And as the bald Negro with the glasses reads his *True Story*  
 And the old woman is quivering behind her morning glory  
 The inconceivable girl with the timetable, feather and leer,  
 A mammoth dumpling of sex, is ensconced on the atmosphere.

Beneath the tons of complacence the subway deftly delves  
 With people sitting satisfied with their incomparable selves:  
 A child across the way is dangling out of a fairy tale book  
 Dipping in the advertisements the divining rod of her look:  
 The dismal fans are languidly stroking the beard of the wind:  
 Behind the newspaper fronts the sins of thought are sinned.

This is the skin of death and every pore is a face  
 Pulsating against tomorrow, the vacuum thighs of space:  
 This is life the story teller, telling endless tales  
 To keep himself alive as the iron eyelid falls:  
 This is the explosion chamber, the secret room of the spark  
 Where the populations whirl with the poured breath of the dark

A jungle of prongs is scraping the tough hide of the present:  
 The huge centipede of station leaps at the vein imprisoned:  
 The subway's galvanized throat is torn into craters of speed:  
 The sullen meantime is bulging with the ingots of greed:  
 And what is true is in conspiracy with the thing that seems  
 And steel continues to scream, so long as man screams



\* H U G H M A C D I A R M I D \*

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REFLECTIONS IN AN IRON WORKS

WOULD you resembled the metal you work with,  
Would the iron entered into your souls,  
Would you became like steel on your own behalf!  
You are still only putty that tyranny rolls  
Between its fingers! You makers of bayonets and guns  
For your own destruction! No wonder that those  
Weapons you make turn on you and mangle and  
murder—  
You fools who equip your otherwise helpless foes!



AT THE CENOTAPH

**A**RE the living so much use  
That we need to mourn the dead?  
Or would it yield better results  
To reverse their roles instead?  
The millions slain in the War—  
Untimely, the best of our seed?—  
Would the world be any the better  
If they were still living indeed?  
The achievements of such as are  
To the notion lend no support;  
The whole history of life and death  
Yields no scrap of evidence for't.—  
Keep going to your wars, you fools, as of yore;  
I'm the civilization you're fighting for.

\* D E L M O R E S C H W A R T Z \*

---

FOR ONE WHO WOULD NOT TAKE HIS LIFE IN HIS  
HANDS

A THLETE, virtuoso,  
Training for happiness,  
Bend arm and knee, and seek  
The body's sharp distress;  
For pain is pleasure's cost,  
Denial is the route  
To speech before the millions  
Or personal with the flute.

The ape and great Achilles,  
Heavy with their fate,  
Batter doors down, strike  
Small children at the gate;  
Driven by love to this,  
As knock-kneed Hegel said,  
To seek with a sword for peace  
That the child may be lifted from  
The recent dead.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said  
The curious Socrates,  
"I have asked: What is this life  
But a childermass,  
As Abraham recognized,



*MODERN POETRY*

A working with the knife  
At animal, maid, and stone  
Until we have cut down  
All but the soul alone:  
Through hate we come to love,  
No other means is known."

*SCHWARTZ*

IN THE NAKED BED, IN PLATO'S CAVE

IN THE naked bed, in Plato's cave,  
I Reflected headlights slowly slid the wall,  
Carpenters hammered under the shaded window,  
Wind troubled the window curtains all night long,  
A fleet of trucks strained uphill, grinding,  
Their freights covered, as usual.  
The ceiling lightened again, the slanting diagram  
Slid slowly forth.

Hearing the milkman's chop,  
His striving up the stair, the bottle's chink,  
I rose from bed, lit a cigarette,  
And walked to the window. The stony street  
Displayed the stillness in which buildings stand,  
The street-lamp's vigil and the horse's patience.  
The winter sky's pure capital  
Turned me back to bed with exhausted eyes.

Strangeness grew in the motionless air. The loose  
Film grayed. Shaking wagons, hooves' waterfalls,  
Sounded far off, increasing, louder and nearer.  
A car coughed, starting. Morning, softly  
Melting the air, lifted the half-covered chair  
From underseas, kindled the looking-glass,  
Distinguished the dresser and the white wall.  
The bird called tentatively, whistled, called,  
Bubbled and whistled, so! Perplexed, still wet  
With sleep, affectionate, hungry and cold. So, so,  
A son of man, the ignorant night, the travail  
Of early morning, the mystery of beginning  
Again and again,

while History is unforgiven.



\* M U R I E L R U K E Y S E R \*

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CITY OF MONUMENTS

*Washington, 1934*

**B**E PROUD you people of these graves  
these chiseled words this precedent  
From these blind ruins shines our monument.

Dead navies of the brain will sail  
stone celebrate its final choice  
when the air shakes, a single voice  
a strong voice able to prevail:

Entrust no hope to stone although the stone  
shelter the root: see too-great burdens placed  
with nothing certain but the risk  
set on the infirm column of  
the high memorial obelisk

erect in accusation sprung against  
a barren sky taut over Anacostia:

give over, Gettysburg! a word will shake your glory:  
blood of the starved fell thin upon this plain,  
this battle is not buried with its slain.

Gravestone and battlefield retire  
the whole green South is shadowed dark,

*RUKER*

the slick white domes are cast in night.  
But uneclipsed above the park

the veteran of the Civil War  
sees havoc in the tended graves  
the midnight bugles blown to free  
still unemancipated slaves

Blinded by chromium or transfiguration  
we watch, as through a microscope, decay:  
down the broad streets the limousines  
advance in passions of display.

Air glints with diamonds, and these clavicles  
emerge through orchids by whose trailing spoor  
the sensitive cannot mistake  
the implicit anguish of the poor.

The throats incline, the marble men rejoice  
careless of torrents of despair.

Split by a tendril of revolt  
stone cedes to blossom everywhere.



BOY WITH HIS HAIR CUT SHORT

SUNDAY shuts down on this twentieth-century evening.  
The L passes. Twilight and bulb define  
the brown room, the overstuffed plum sofa,  
the boy, and the girl's thin hands above his head.  
A neighbor's radio sings stocks, news, serenade.

He sits at the table, head down, the young clear neck  
exposed,  
watching the drugstore sign from the tail of his eye;  
tattoo, neon, until the eye blears, while his  
solicitous tall sister, simple in blue, bending  
behind him, cuts his hair with her cheap shears.

The arrow's electric red always reaches its mark,  
successful neon! He coughs, impressed by that precision.  
His child's forehead, forever protected by his cap,  
is bleached against the lamplight as he turns head  
and steadies to let the snippets drop.

Erasing the failure of weeks with level fingers,  
she sleeks the fine hair, combing: "You'll look fine  
tomorrow!  
You'll surely find something, they can't keep turning  
you down;  
the finest gentleman's not so trim as you!" Smiling, he  
raises  
the adolescent forehead wrinkling ironic now.

He sees his decent suit laid out, new-pressed,  
his carfare on the shelf. He lets his head fall, meeting

*RUKEYSER*

her earnest hopeless look, seeing the sharp blades splitting,  
the darkened room, the impersonal sign, her motion,  
the blue vein, bright on her temple, pitifully beating



CITATION FOR HORACE GREGORY

THESE are our brave, these with their hands in on the  
work,  
hammering out beauty upon the painful stone  
turning their grave heads passionately finding  
truth and alone and each day subtly slain  
and each day born.

Revolves

a measured system, world upon world, stemmed fires  
and regulated galaxies behind the flattened head,  
behind the immortal skull, ticking eternity  
in blood and the symbols of living.

The brass voice speaks in the street

STRIKE STRIKE

the nervous fingers continue elaborately  
drawing consciousness, examining, doing.  
Rise to a billboard world of Chesterfield,  
Mae West hip-wriggles, Tarzan prowess, the little  
nibbling and despicable minds.

Here, gentlemen,

here is our gallery of poets:

Jeffers,

a long and tragic drum-roll beating anger,  
sick of a catapulting nightmare world,  
Eliot, who lead us to the precipice  
subtly and perfectly; there striking an attitude  
rigid and ageing on the penultimate step,  
the thoughtful man MacLeish who bent his head  
feeling the weight of the living; bent, and turned  
the grave important face round to the dead.



*RUKEYSER*

And on your left, ladies and gentlemen: poets.

Young poets and makers, solve your anguish, see  
the brave unmedalled, who dares to shape his mind,  
printed with dignity, to the machines of change.  
A procession of poets adds one footbeat to the  
implacable metric line: the great and unbetrayed  
after the sunlight and the failing yellow,  
after the lips bitten with passion and  
gentle, after the deaths, below  
dance-floors of celebration we turn we turn  
these braveries are permanent. These gifts  
flare on our lives, clarifying, revealed.

We are too young to see our funerals  
in pantomime nightly before uneasy beds,  
too near beginnings for this hesitation  
obliterated in death or carnival.  
Deep into time extend the impersonal stairs,  
established barricades will stand,  
before they die the brave have set their hand  
on rich particular beauty for their heirs.



\* W . H . A U D E N \*

---

IT IS TIME FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF ERROR

IT is time for the destruction of error.  
The chairs are being brought in from the garden,  
The summer talk stopped on that savage coast  
Before the storms, after the guests and birds:  
In sanatoriums they laugh less and less,  
Less certain of cure; and the loud madman  
Sinks now into a more terrible calm.

The falling leaves know it, the children,  
At play on the fuming alkali-tip  
Or by the flooded football ground, know it—  
This is the dragon's day, the devourer's:  
Orders are given to the enemy for a time  
With underground proliferation of mould,  
With constant whisper and the casual question,  
To haunt the poisoned in his shunned house,  
To destroy the efflorescence of the flesh,  
The intricate play of the mind, to enforce  
Conformity with the orthodox bone,  
With organized fear, the articulated skeleton.

You whom I gladly walk with, touch,  
Or wait for as one certain of good,  
We know it, we know that love  
Needs more than the admiring excitement of union,

AUDEN

More than the abrupt self-confident farewell,  
The heel on the finishing blade of grass,  
The self-confidence of the falling root,  
Needs death, death of the grain, our death,  
Death of the old gang; would leave them  
In sullen valley where is made no friend,  
The old gang to be forgotten in the spring,  
The hard bitch and the riding-master,  
Stiff underground; deep in clear lake  
The lolling bridegroom, beautiful, there.



LOOK, STRANGER

LOOK, stranger. at this island now  
The leaping light for your delight discovers,  
Stand stable here  
And silent be,  
That through the channels of the ear  
May wander like a river  
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause  
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges  
Oppose the pluck  
And knock of the tide,  
And the shingle scrambles after the suck-  
ing surf, and the gull lodges  
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships  
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands;  
And the full view  
Indeed may enter  
And move in memory as now these clouds do,  
That pass the harbour mirror  
And all the summer through the water saunter.



PROLOGUE

O LOVE, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven,  
 Make simpler daily the beating of man's heart; within,  
 There in the ring where name and image meet,

Inspire them with such a longing as will make his thought  
 Alive like patterns a murmur of starlings  
 Rising in joy over wolds unwittingly weave;

Here too on our little reef display your power,  
 This fortress perched on the edge of the Atlantic scarp,  
 The mole between all Europe and the exile-crowded sea;

And make us as Newton was, who in his garden watching  
 The apple falling toward England, became aware  
 Between himself and her of an eternal tie.

For now that dream which so long has contented our will,  
 I mean, of uniting the dead into a splendid empire,  
 Under whose fertilising flood the Lancashire moss

Sprouted up chimneys, and Glamorgan hid a life  
 Grim as a tidal rock-pool's in its glove-shaped valleys,  
 Is already retreating into her maternal shadow;

Leaving the furnaces gasping in the impossible air,  
 The flotsam at which Dumbarton gapes and hungers;  
 While upon wind-loved Rowley no hammer shakes

The cluster of mounds like a midget golf course, graves  
 Of some who created these intelligible dangerous marvels;  
 Affectionate people, but crude their sense of glory.



Far-sighted as falcons, they looked down another future;  
For the seed in their loins were hostile, though afraid  
    of their pride,  
And, tall with a shadow now, inertly wait.

In bar, in netted chicken-farm, in lighthouse,  
Standing on these impoverished constricting acres,  
The ladies and gentlemen apart, too much alone,

Consider years of the measured world begun,  
The barren spiritual marriage of stone and water.  
Yet, O, at this very moment of our hopeless sigh

When inland they are thinking their thoughts but are  
    watching these islands,  
As children in Chester look to Moel Fammau to decide  
On picnics by the clearness or withdrawl of her tree-  
    less crown,

Some possible dream, long coiled in the ammonite's  
    slumber  
Is uncurling, prepared to lay on our talk and kindness  
Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain;

And out of the Future, into actual History,  
As when Merlin, tamer of horses, and his lords to whom  
Stonehenge was still a thought, the Pillars passed

And into the undared ocean swung north their prow,  
Drives through the night and star-concealing dawn  
For the virgin roadsteads of our hearts an unwavering  
    keel.



MUSÉE DES BEAUX ARTS

ABOUT suffering they were never wrong,  
 The Old Masters: how well they understood  
 Its human position; how it takes place  
 While someone else is eating or opening a window or just  
 walking dully along;  
 How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
 For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
 Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
 On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
 They never forgot  
 That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
 Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
 Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the tor-  
 turer's horse  
 Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns  
 away  
 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may  
 Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
 But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
 As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
 Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
 Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.



From FOR THE TIME BEING

1. NARRATOR

IF, ON account of the political situation,  
 There are quite a number of homes without roofs, and men  
 Lying about in the countryside neither drunk nor asleep,  
 If all sailings have been cancelled till further notice,  
 If it's unwise now to say much in letters, and if,  
 Under the subnormal temperatures prevailing,  
 The two sexes are at present the weak and the strong,  
 That is not at all unusual for the time of the year.  
 If that were all we should know how to manage. Flood, fire,  
 The dessication of grasslands, restraint of princes,  
 Piracy on the high seas, physical pain and fiscal grief,  
 These after all are our familiar tribulations,  
 And we have been through them before, many, many times,  
 As events which belong to the natural world where  
 The occupation of space is the real and final fact  
 And time turns round itself in an obedient circle,  
 They occur again and again but only to pass  
 Again and again into their formal opposites,  
 From sword to ploughshare, coffin to cradle, war to work,  
 So that, taking the bad with the good, the pattern composed  
 By the ten thousand odd things that can possibly happen  
 Is permanent in a general sort of way.

Till lately we knew of no other, and between us we seemed  
 To have what it took—the adrenal courage of the tiger,  
 The chameleon's discretion, the modesty of the doe,  
 Or the fern's devotion to spatial necessity:  
 To practice one's peculiar civic virtue was not



So impossible after all; to cut our losses  
And bury our dead was really quite easy: That was why  
We were always able to say: "We are children of God,  
And our Father has never forsaken His people."

But then we were children: That was a moment ago,  
Before an outrageous novelty had been introduced  
Into our lives. Why were we never warned? Perhaps we were  
Perhaps that mysterious noise at the back of the brain  
We noticed on certain occasions—sitting alone  
In the waiting room of the country junction, looking  
Up at the toilet window—was not indigestion  
But this Horror starting already to scratch Its way in?  
Just how, just when It succeeded we shall never know:  
We can only say that now It is there and that nothing  
We learnt before It was there is now of the slightest use,  
For nothing like It has happened before. It's as if  
We had left our house for five minutes to mail a letter,  
And during that time the living room had changed places  
With the room behind the mirror over the fireplace;  
It's as if, waking up with a start, we discovered  
Ourselves stretched out flat on the floor, watching our  
shadow

Sleepily stretching itself at the window. I mean  
That the world of space where events reoccur is still there,  
Only now it's no longer real; the real one is nowhere  
Where time never moves and nothing can ever happen:  
I mean that although there's a person we know all about  
Still bearing our name and loving himself as before,  
That person has become a fiction; our true existence  
Is decided by no one and has no importance to love.

That is why we despair; that is why we should welcome  
The nursery bogey or the winecellar ghost, why even



The violent howling of winter and war has become  
Like a juke-box tune that we dare not stop. We are afraid  
Of pain but more afraid of silence; for no nightmare  
Of hostile objects could be as terrible as this Void.  
This is the Abomination. This is the wrath of God.

2. CHORUS

O where is that immortal and nameless Center from which  
our points of  
definition and death are all equi-distant? Where  
The well of our wish to wander, the everlasting fountain  
Of the waters of joy that our sorrow uses for tears?  
O where is the garden of Being that is only known in Existence  
As the command to be never there, the sentence by which  
Alephs of throbbing fact have been banished into position,  
The clock that dismisses the moment into the turbine of time?

O would I could mourn over Fate like the others, the resolute  
creatures,  
By seizing my chance to regret. The Stone is content  
With formal anger and falls and falls; the plants are indignant  
With one dimension only and can only doubt  
Whether light or darkness lies in the worse direction; and  
the subtler  
Exiles who try every path are satisfied  
With proving that none have a goal: why must Man also  
acknowledge  
It is not enough to bear witness, for even protest is wrong?

Earth is cooled and fire is quenched by his unique excitement  
All answers expire in the clench of his questioning hand,  
His singular emphasis frustrates all possible order:  
Alas, his genius is wholly for envy; alas,



AUDEN

The vegetative sadness of lakes, the locomotive beauty  
Of choleric beasts of prey, are nearer than he  
To the dreams that deprive him of sleep, the powers that  
    compel him to idle,  
To his amorous nymphs and his sanguine athletic gods.

How can his knowledge protect his desire for truth from illusion?

How can he wait without idols to worship, without  
Their overwhelming persuasion that somewhere, over the high  
    hill,

Under the roots of the oak, in the depths of the sea,  
Is a womb or a tomb wherein he may halt to express some  
    attainment?

How can he hope and not dream that his solitude  
Shall disclose a vibrating flame at last and entrust him forever  
With its magic secret of how to extemporize life?





\* PART FIVE \*

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. . . and we have paid  
For poetry with living blood. What age  
But ours can boast this terrifying truth?  
Nor can we minister the antidote  
To art, to science or to society  
Through more and more and more analysis.  
We must not now embroider the confusion;  
Toward language we must show the piety  
Of simple craftsmen for their wood. I wish  
I might agree with Yeats in his opinion  
That in our forty years we have produced  
More poets of worth than any generation  
From 1630 on! Were we so good  
These vices of our rime would not be loosed  
So carelessly upon us. We would find  
More art, more love, more poetry of the kind  
That Yeats bequeathed, and less verse of the mind.

KARL SHAPIRO





\* R I C H A R D E B E R H A R T \*

---

NOW IS THE AIR MADE OF CHIMING BALLS

Now is the air made of chiming balls.  
The stormcloud, wizened, has rolled its rind away.  
Now is the eye with hill and valley laved  
And the seeds, assuaged, peep from the nested spray.  
The bluebird drops from a bough. The speckled meadow-lark  
Springs in his lithe array. Fresh air  
Blesses the vanished tear; the bunched anguish.  
The laughing balls their joyful pleasure tear.  
Renewed is the whole world and the sun  
Begins to dress with warmth again every thing.  
The lettuce in pale burn; the burdock tightening;  
And naked necks of craning fledglings.



I WALKED OUT TO THE GRAVEYARD TO SEE THE  
DEAD

I WALKED out to the graveyard to see the dead  
The iron gates were locked, I couldn't get in,  
A golden pheasant on the dark fir boughs  
Looked with fearful method at the sunset,

Said I, Sir bird, wink no more at me  
I have had enough of my dark eye-smarting,  
I cannot adore you, nor do I praise you,  
But assign you to the rafters of Montaigne.

Who talks with the Absolute salutes a Shadow,  
Who seeks himself shall lose himself;  
And the golden pheasants are no help  
And action must be learned from love of man.



IF I COULD ONLY LIVE AT THE PITCH THAT IS NEAR  
MADNESS

IF I could only live at the pitch that is near madness  
When everything is as it was in my childhood  
Violent, vivid, and of infinite possibility:  
That the sun and the moon broke over my head.

Then I cast time out of the trees and fields,  
Then I stood immaculate in the Ego;  
Then I eyed the world with all delight,  
Reality was the perfection of my sight.

And time has big handles on the hands,  
Fields and trees a way of being themselves.  
I saw battalions of the race of mankind  
Standing stolid, demanding a moral answer.

I gave the moral answer and I died  
And into a realm of complexity came  
Where nothing is possible but necessity  
And the truth wailing there like a red babe.



## MODERN POETRY

### THE HUMANIST

HUNTING for the truly human  
I looked for the true man  
And saw an ape at the fair  
With the circle still to square. Learning  
Breeds its own ignorance. Fame and power  
Demand a rush and pounding.  
Those who rush through rush through, and who  
Are they but those who rush through?  
Yet truth resides in contemplation  
And comprehension of contemplation  
Not necessarily of Plato. Action explains  
A field full of folk and golden football flexions,  
Action for actors. Truth through contemplation  
Resurrects the truly human,  
Makes known the true man  
Whom these lines can scan:  
But miss his secret final point.  
The world is too much in joint. No use  
Setting that right, that squaring, that harrying: for  
The true man lives in mystery  
Of God; God his agile soul will see  
But he will not see God's majesty,  
And that is what makes you and me  
Whether man or woman  
Neither true nor free  
But truly human.

FATHER

**A**N EAST WIND asperges Boston with Lynn's sulphurous brine.  
Under the bridge of turrets my father built,—from  
    turning sign  
of CHEVROLET, out-topping our gilt State House Dome  
to burning sign of CARTER'S INK,—drip multitudes  
of checker-board shadows. Inverted turreted reflections  
sleeping over axle-grease billows, through all directions  
cross-cut parliamentary gulls, who toss like gourds.

Speak. Speak to me again, as fresh as saddle leather  
(Speak; talk again) to a hunter smells of heather.  
Come home. Wire a wire of warning without words.  
Come home and talk to me again, my first friend. Father,  
come home, dead man, who made your mind my home.



\* R . P . B L A C K M U R \*

---

ALL THINGS ARE A FLOWING

FLOWERS do better here than peas and beans,  
Here nothing men may save can save its mark;  
Reason a glitter flowing blues to greens  
Beyond the offshore shoals gains ocean dark,  
The poor within us climb the cliff and stare  
Through second eyes and are sea-beggared there

Sun warms the flesh, but in the marrow, wind;  
The seagulls over head and neater tern  
Scream woodthrush in the birches out of mind.  
How warm a marrow cold enough to burn!  
There is no shelter here, no self-warm lair,  
When every lung eddies the ocean air.

All's weather here and sure, visible change;  
It is the permutation of the stone,  
The inner crumbling of the mountain range,  
Breathes in our air sea rôle and moan.  
And this the steadied heart, our own, must bear.  
Suncalm and stormcalm, both in breathless air.

Here men wear natural colours, mostly blue,  
Colour of fusion, shade of unison,  
Colour of nothingness seen twice, come true,  
Colour the gods must be that come undone:  
Colour of succour and mirage. O snare  
And reservoir, death ravens in arrear.



## OCTOBER FROST

THE comfortable noise long reading makes  
brimming within the inward ear,  
at midnight stopped like a sharp cough,  
like a warm garment taken off.  
I heard the kitchen slowly creak,  
unsettling all its ancient gear,  
and saw beyond the lamplight loom  
the further darkness of the room.  
Life was a draining out, until,  
need and custom joining will,  
I went outside into the night  
where in the moon the frost was bright.

Cold in the temples, cold  
lifting the rooted hair,  
it is the new cold  
quickenning the richened air.

Across the mudflats of Flat Bay  
the tide was moonwards making way,  
and on the water's rising edge  
among the eelgrass and salt sedge  
the endless rustle and soft clucks  
of a thousand feeding ducks  
made a warm noise about my ears.  
Quiet, I crept between the tiers  
of young white birch. But a stick cracked  
under my foot and a duck quacked



*MODERN POETRY*

loudly in the comfortable night.  
Like wind breaking, their thousand-flight  
soared up. Transfixed on the bright ground  
I filled with the full frost of sound.

\* KENNETH REXROTH \*

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## NOW, ON THIS DAY OF THE FIRST HUNDRED FLOWERS

Now, on this day of the first hundred flowers,  
Fate pauses for us in imagination,  
As it shall not ever in reality—  
As these swifts that link endless parabolas  
Change guard unseen in their secret crevices.  
Other anniversaries that we have walked  
Along this hillcrest through the black fir forest,  
Past the abandoned farm, have been just the same—  
Even the fog necklaces on the fencewires  
Seem to have gained or lost hardly a jewel;  
The annual and diurnal patterns hold.  
Even the attrition of the cypress grove  
Is slow and orderly, each year one more tree  
Breaks ranks and lies down, decrepit in the wind.  
Each year, on summer's first luminous morning,  
The swallows come back, whispering and weaving  
Figure eights around the sharp curves of the swifts,  
Plaiting together the summer air all day,  
That the bats and owls unravel in the nights.  
And we come back, the signs of time upon us,  
In the pause of fate, the threading of the year.



HERE I SIT, READING THE STOIC

HERE I sit, reading the Stoic  
Latin of Tacitus.  
Tiberius sinks in senile  
Gloom as Aeneas sank  
In the smoky throat of Hades;  
And the prose glitters like  
A tray of dental instruments.  
The toss head president,  
Deep in his private catacomb,  
Is preparing to pull  
The trigger. His secretaries  
Make speeches. In ten years  
The art of communication  
Will be more limited.  
The wheel, the lever, the incline,  
May survive, and perhaps,  
The alphabet. At the moment  
The intellectual  
Advance guard is agitated  
Over the relation  
Between the Accumulation  
Of Capital and the  
Systematic Derangement of  
The Senses, and the Right  
To Homosexuality.

REMEMBER 'THAT BREAKFAST ONE NOVEMBER

REMEMBER that breakfast one November—  
 Cold black grapes smelling faintly  
 Of the cork they were packed in,  
 Hard rolls with hot, white flesh  
 And thick, honey sweetened chocolate?  
 And the parties at night; the gin and the tangos?  
 The torn hair nets, the lost cuff links?  
 Where have they all gone to,  
 The beautiful girls, the abandoned hours?  
 They said we were lost, mad and immoral,  
 And interfered with the plans of the management.  
 And today, millions and millions, shut alive  
 In the coffins of circumstance,  
 Beat on the buried lids,  
 Huddle in the cellars of ruins, and quarrel  
 Over their own fragmented flesh.



## MODERN POETRY

### ADONIS IN SUMMER

THE Lotophagi with their silly hands  
Haunt me in sleep, plucking at my sleeve;  
Their gibbering laughter and blank eyes  
Hide on the edge of the mind's vision  
In dusty subways and crowded streets.  
Late in August, asleep, Adonis  
Appeared to me, frenzied and bleeding  
And showed me, clutched in his hand, the plow  
That broke the dream of Persephone.  
The next day, regarding the scorched grass  
In the wilting park, I became aware  
That beneath me, beneath the gravel  
And the hurrying ants, and the loam  
And the subsoil, lay the glacial drift,  
The Miocene jungles, the reptiles  
Of the Jurassic, the cuttlefish  
Of the Devonian, Cambrian  
Worms, and the mysteries of the gneiss;  
Their histories folded, docketed  
In darkness; and deeper still the hot  
Black core of iron, and once again  
The inscrutable archaic rocks,  
And the long geologic ladder,  
And the living soil and the strange trees,  
And the tangled bodies of lovers  
Under the strange stars.

And beside me,  
A mad old man, plucking at my sleeve.



IGNORANCE OF DEATH

THEN there is this civilizing love of death, by which  
Even music and painting tell you what else to love.  
Buddhists and Christians contrive to agree about death

Making death their ideal basis for different ideals.  
The communists however disapprove of death  
Except when practical. The people who dig up

Corpses and rape them are I understand not reported.  
The Freudians regard the death-wish as fundamental,  
Though the 'clamour of life' proceeds from its rival 'Eros'.

Whether you are to admire a given case for making less clamour  
Is not their story. Liberal hopefulness  
Regards death as a mere border to an improving picture.

Because we have neither hereditary nor direct knowledge of death  
It is the trigger of the literary man's biggest gun  
And we are happy to equate it to any conceived calm.

Heaven me, when a man is ready to die about something  
Other than himself, and is in fact ready because of that,  
Not because of himself, that is something clear about himself.

Otherwise I feel very blank upon this topic,  
And think that though important, and proper for anyone to bring  
up,  
It is one that most people should be prepared to be blank upon.



MODERN POETRY

\* JOSE GARCIA VILLA \*

---

BE BEAUTIFUL, NOBLE, LIKE THE ANTIQUE ANT

BE BEAUTIFUL, noble, like the antique ant,  
Who bore the storms as he bore the sun,  
Wearing neither gown nor helmet,  
Though he was archbishop and soldier:  
Wore only his own flesh.

Salute characters with gracious dignity:  
Though what these are is left to  
Your own terms. Exact: the universe is  
Not so small but these will be found  
Somewhere. Exact: they will be found.

Speak with great moderation: but think  
With great fierceness, burning passion:  
Though what the ant thought  
No annals reveal, nor his descendants  
Break the seal.

Trace the tracelessness of the ant,  
Every ant has reached this perfection.  
As he comes, so he goes,  
Flowing as water flows,  
Essential but secret like a rose.

HORAE

I

IT PALES. As if a look  
Invisible, came in the east.  
In some far vale a rooster  
Expels his cry of life.

Now dark but not formless  
On the grey meads the trees  
Lean and are looming soft.

In those towers of night  
Ruffling things awake  
Their declaration and chuckle.

Starpoint fades from the dew.

To every mile that sleeps  
The cock's barbaric cry  
And the wind comes cool.

Shiver of day break.

II

Now air, gentle pillager  
In the citadels of summer,  
Lifts a leaf here and there.



*MODERN POETRY*

Some holds the cornfield still  
In his dream of the real.

From a wavering of bees  
One droning steers away,  
Elated in his golden car.  
A cow stumbles and streams,  
Reaching the meadow.

Tiny brutality in the grass  
Manipulates the foe  
Sawing and champing. Oh, soundless.

What burning contemplation  
Rests in these distances?  
What is seen by the leaves  
Mirrored as in fair water  
Millionfold?—as the eye of man  
Finds itself in myriads.

III

The limber shadow is longer.  
Air moves now breathing  
In the plumes of corn.

Gnats on their elastics  
Are busy with evening.  
Heavy with night the owl  
Floats through the forest.

Shadow takes all the grass.

Beyond indigo mountains  
Golden sheaves are fastened

*FITZGERALD*

Lightly on the infinite  
West. What joy or feast  
Has these for ornament?  
What reclining host?  
  
They sink away in peace.



## MODERN POETRY

### MEMENTOES

THE inland cities on the rivers  
Stream into the clear morning.  
Rust and slag, junk in the marshes,  
Where the wind shivers the tall weeds.  
From the gliding Pullman see  
Steamy light on the weather vanes,  
Golden crosses on distant steeples  
Risen above the smoke and dew.  
A child in a dirty shift watches  
From a tumbledown garden or threadbare  
Screen door; wide-eyed pickaninnies  
Curl their toes in the sweet air.  
Slower with swaying jerks and turning  
A long curve between factory windows,  
Blackened fences, cindery yards,  
Enter the early hustle of men:  
The grey drayhorses smiting, backing,  
On Market Street; moustachioed  
Entrepreneurs with golden fobs  
Brisk on the cobbles; rumble and yell.

The lumber schooners pass on the lake  
And the slow barges from the north  
Pass in the offshore bite of whitecaps:  
Superior, Erie, Michigan,  
Loaded with ore from the wilderness  
For the furnaces of Pennsylvania,  
Loaded with grain from the cool prairies,  
Passing the evergreen shores and the beaches.



## *FITZGERALD*

The wind out of the south blows over  
The stony mansions in the sunlight,  
A browner haze, bringing the odor  
Of blood and offal. The long and short-horns  
Crowd from the West, from the lone corrals  
Of Kansas, Texas, high Wyoming.  
There the sun makes the land shimmer,  
Tawny and pale, the vast rangeland;  
There the smoke from a locomotive  
Worms up slowly all morning long.

Trainmen and rangeriders: remember  
The water tanks, the peeling clapboards,  
The silent noon of desert towns;  
Remember the hot nights and whiskey  
And silver dollars on the tables;  
Remember the women and the badman  
Out of the badlands, wiping his mouth;  
Goodbye, you fast thumbs on the sixgun,  
Knee-ers and rabbit-punchers, dusty  
Bastards in from the plains with pay;  
Goodbye Belle and Jenny and Mister  
LaPorte from St. Louis with yellow vests;  
Goodbye to buckboards and Winchesters,  
To the hobbled ponies, the trading post.  
Cody, pray for us; Wister, bless us;  
So long, strangers, so long.

## II

Patent leathers and white kid gloves:  
Lovely, humiliated or gay,  
Arrogant or dreaming with the dance,  
They move in grace between the mirrors,



*MODERN POETRY*

In candle light. The cool odor,  
"Cologne," breathes above "bodices,"  
And the ever-so-silken, continual  
Draping, re-draping of skirts. Hushabye.  
Smiles of trust or invitation  
Whirl away on lustrous lapels  
Laughing under the fiddles. Comely  
Shoulders, powdery backs, warm  
Flanks under ruffles, smooth elbows,  
All are turning in the courteous  
Viennese music, end of the century.  
Newport, Narragansett, Richmond,  
Boston, New York and Baltimore,  
Far into morning. Sheering the snow,  
The cutters at a good clip jingle  
Uphill running into starlight,  
Bundled and singing. Stilly night.

Goodbye to all your tears, sweethearts,  
And your stern gentlemen at home;  
Goodbye to the shy lieutenant, the gigglers,  
The convents and the musical studies,  
The crushes and the exclamations;  
Goodbye to the box at the theatre  
And the slow fanning in the gaslight;  
To summers at Sheepshead Bay, to muslins,  
To bare forearms and serenaders,  
Ribbons and billets-doux, goodbye.

Milly and Daisy and Henrietta  
And Isabel, beauties, pray for us  
In your fresh heaven, on those lawns  
By Thames under the copper beeches,

*FITZGERALD*

Behind the iron gates in ducal  
Shadow: ambassadors! At Venice  
Where the old and weary and splendid  
Spiders of the world devoured you,  
Who were not ever in anything  
Quite so correct as they. Sisters,  
Mothers later corrupted, maidens  
Living like men into bewilderment  
With a stiff upper lip: you masks  
At operas and marriages,  
Matriarchs with knobby canes,  
Goodbye, goodbye gentlewomen.



\* KENNETH PATCHEN \*

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HE THOUGHT OF MAD ELLEN'S RAVINGS AND OF THE  
WRETCHED SKELETON ON THE ROCK

It's more than a hundred years now . . .  
That yellow hair, the white throat, the witching thighs  
Gone! Left to rot in the wind and blue-assed water.  
Tell me about your cities, your flame-footed ships,  
Your proud maps and monkey-dung; tell me of conquest,  
Tell me how the blacks tugged your fat around  
I don't want to hear it. I want to see her face again  
I want to tell her not to be afraid. God! I don't want this  
I want to hear her voice. I want to take her into my arms  
I don't want to fight their wars. I don't want to kill anyone  
And I don't want anyone to kill me. I don't want people  
To come smelling round me like dogs with their damn tricks.

*There's a huge house on the sand  
And every day the gardener should water  
The munition maker who lives there*

Fires burn in a few places . . .  
Ellen's wanton beauty . . . lost in the black water

Have you heard the mad fiddles?  
Jig it, Death; slap it round, God  
I love the wikgirl, the sly moodus,  
The stinking honker; make mine

PATCHEN

You, O grinning angel, my gregbird,  
Luklove, higbard, no holes barred babe.  
Turtle in the bough and waterhawk hello.

Here rixnag, hi piphog, riding the bubsea,  
Reeling like a soplad after this dohgal,  
Hark my hundipper, pimpgetter whole.  
Smear it up, Death; knock it down, Godie-Boy.

Tell me about the legend that can never die.  
Were there proud songs? was there singing?  
Christ! I don't want this. I want to hear her voice  
I want her arms to go round me and the sea howling at another  
coast—

*With all the lost dreams of men watching us and not crying*

Flames hollow the face of our humble song



THE CHARACTER OF LOVE SEEN AS A SEARCH FOR  
THE LOST

YOU, the woman; I, the man; this, the world:  
And each is the work of all.

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;  
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing  
Over the walkers in the village; and there are  
Many beautiful arms about us and the things we know.

See how those stars tramp over heaven on their sticks  
Of ancient light: with what simplicity that blue  
Takes eternity into the quiet cave of God, where Caesar  
And Socrates, like primitive paintings on a wall,  
Look, with idiot eyes, on the world where we two are.

You, the sought for; I, the seeker; this, the search:  
And each is the mission of all.

For greatness is only the drayhorse that coaxes  
The built cart out; and where we go is reason.  
But genius is an enormous littleness, a trickling  
Of heart that covers alike the hare and the hunter.

How smoothly, like the sleep of a flower, love,  
The grassy wind moves over night's tense meadow:  
See how the great wooden eyes of the forest  
Stare upon the architecture of our innocence.

You, the village; I, the stranger; this, the road:  
And each is the work of all.

## *PATCHEN*

Then, not that man do more, or stop pity; but that he be  
Wider in living; that all his cities fly a clean flag . . .  
We have been alone too long, love; it is terribly late  
For the pierced feet on the water and we must not die now.

Have you wondered why all the windows in heaven were broken?  
Have you seen the homeless in the open grave of God's hand?  
Do you want to acquaint the larks with the fatuous music of war?

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;  
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing  
Over the walkers in the village; and there are  
Many desperate arms about us and the things we know.



THE GRAND PALACE OF VERSAILLES

AN ELEPHANT made of cotton . . .  
A Towers of lace under which satin-heeled  
Gentlemen sit, playing with the bustles  
Of slightly desiccated Grandes Damns.  
Good morning, Louis; it's a fine day  
In the mirror.

A chaise longue carved  
Out of the living body of a white leopard . . .  
Spools of silk placed in buckets  
Of gilt milk . . . A three-headed dancer  
Prancing to the music of a little bell  
Languidly swung by a Negro with a hairlip.  
Two visiting kings having their canes reheaded,  
While a painter to the court tints their eyebrows  
With the juice of mildly sickening berries.  
What does Salvador Ernst Matta, Louis?  
It's a fine day in the mirror.

It must be amusing to be poor, n'est-ce pas?

WHAT IS THE BEAUTIFUL?

THE narrowing line.  
Walking on the burning ground.  
The ledges of stone.  
Owlfish wading near the horizon.  
Unrest in the outer districts.

Pause.

And begin again.  
Needles through the eye.  
Bodies cracked open like nuts.  
Must have a place.  
Dog has a place.

Pause.

And begin again.  
Tents in the sultry weather.  
Rifles hate holds.  
Who is right?  
Was Christ?  
Is it wrong to love all men?

Pause.

And begin again.  
Contagion of murder.  
But the small whip hits back.  
This is my life, Caesar.  
I think it is good to live.



## MODERN POETRY

Pause.

And begin again.  
Perhaps the shapes will open.  
Will flying fly?  
Will singing have a song?  
Will the shapes of evil fall?  
Will the lives of men grow clean?  
Will the power be for good?  
Will the power of man find its sun?  
Will the power of man flame as a sun?  
Will the power of man turn against death?  
Who is right?  
Is war?

Pause.

And begin again.  
A narrow line.  
Walking on the beautiful ground.  
A ledge of fire.  
It would take little to be free.  
That no man hate another man,  
Because he is black;  
Because he is yellow;  
Because he is white;  
Or because he is English;  
Or German;  
Or rich;  
Or poor;  
Because we are everyman.

Pause.

## PATCHEN

And begin again.  
It would take little to be free.  
That no man live at the expense of another.  
Because no man can own what belongs to all.  
Because no man can kill what all must use.  
Because no man can lie when all are betrayed.  
Because no man can hate when all are hated.

And begin again.  
I know that the shapes will open.  
Flying will fly, and singing will sing.  
Because the only power of man is in good.  
And all evil shall fail.  
Because evil does not work,  
Because the white man and the black man,  
The Englishman and the German,  
Are not real things.  
They are only pictures of things.  
Their shapes like the shapes of the tree  
And the flower, have no lives in names or signs;  
They are their lives, and the real is in them.  
And what is real shall have life always.

Pause.

I believe in the truth.  
I believe that every good thought I have,  
All men shall have.  
I believe that what is best in me,  
Shall be found in every man.  
I believe that only the beautiful  
Shall survive on the earth.  
I believe that the perfect shape of everything  
Has been prepared;



*MODERN POETRY*

And, that we do not fit our own  
Is of little consequence.  
Man beckons to man on this terrible road.  
I believe that we are going into the darkness now;  
Hundreds of years will pass before the light  
Shines over the world of all men . . .  
And I am blinded by its splendor.

Pause.

And begin again

\* D Y L A N T H O M A S \*

---

ESPECIALLY WHEN THE OCTOBER WIND

ESPECIALLY when the October wind  
With frosty fingers punishes my hair,  
Caught by the crabbing sun I walk on fire  
And cast a shadow crab upon the land,  
By sea's side, hearing the noise of birds,  
Hearing the raven cough in winter sticks,  
My busy heart who shudders as she talks  
Sheds the syllabic blood and drains her words.

Shut, too, in a tower of words, I mark  
On the horizon walking like the trees  
The wordy shapes of women, and the rows  
Of the star-gestured children in the park.  
Some let me make you of the vowelled beeches,  
Some of the oaken voices, from the roots  
Of many a thorny shire tell you notes,  
Some let me make you of the water's speeches.

Behind a pot of ferns the wagging clock  
Tells me the hour's word, the neural meaning  
Flies on the shafted disc, declaims the morning  
And tells the windy weather in the cock.  
Some let me make you of the meadow's signs;  
The signal grass that tells me all I know  
Breaks with the wormy winter through the eye.  
Some let me tell you of the raven's sins.



*MODERN POETRY*

Especially when the October wind  
(Some let me make you of autumnal spells,  
The spider-tongued, and the loud hill of Wales)  
With fist of turnips punishes the land,  
Some let me make you of the heartless words.  
The heart is drained that, spelling in the scurry  
Of chemic blood, warned of the coming fury.  
By the sea's side hear the dark-vowelled birds.

THOMAS

EARS IN THE TURRETS HEAR

EARS in the turrets hear  
Hands grumble on the door,  
Eyes in the gables see  
The fingers at the locks.  
Shall I unbolt or stay  
Alone till the day I die  
Unseen by stranger-eyes  
In this white house?  
Hands, hold you poison or grapes?

Beyond this island bound  
By a thin sea of flesh  
And a bone coast,  
The land lies out of sound  
And the hills out of mind.  
No bird or flying fish  
Disturbs this island's rest.

Ears in this island hear  
The wind pass like a fire,  
Eyes in this island see  
Ships anchor off the bay.  
Shall I run to the ships  
With the wind in my hair,  
Or stay till the day I die  
And welcome no sailor?  
Ships, hold you poison or grapes?

Hands grumble on the door,  
Ships anchor off the bay,



*MODERN POETRY*

Rain beats the sand and slates.  
Shall I let in the stranger,  
Shall I welcome the sailor,  
Or stay till the day I die?

Hands of the stranger and holds of the ships,  
Hold you poison or grapes?

THOMAS

THE HAND THAT SIGNED THE PAPER FELLED A CITY

THE hand that signed the paper felled a city;  
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,  
Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country;  
These five kings did a king to death.

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,  
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;  
A goose's quill has put an end to murder  
That put an end to talk.

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,  
And famine grew, and locusts came;  
Great is the hand that holds dominion over  
Man by a scribbled name.

The five kings count the dead but do not soften  
The crusted wound nor pat the brow;  
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;  
Hands have no tears to flow.



AND DEATH SHALL HAVE NO DOMINION

AND death shall have no dominion.  
Dead men naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west moon;  
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
Under the windings of the sea  
They lying long shall not die windily;  
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,  
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;  
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,  
And the unicorn evils run them through;  
Split all ends up they shan't crack;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
No more may gulls cry at their ears  
Or waves break loud on the seashores;  
Where blew a flower may a flower no more  
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;  
Though they be mad and dead as nails,  
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;  
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,  
And death shall have no dominion.

\* G E O R G E B A R K E R \*

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SONNET

*to my mother*

MOST near, most dear, most loved and most far,  
Under the window where I often found her  
Sitting as huge as Asia, seismic with laughter,  
Gin and chicken helpless in her Irish hand,  
Irresistible as Rabelais but most tender for  
The lame dogs and hurt birds that surround her,—  
She is a procession no one can follow after  
But be like a little dog following a brass band.

She will not glance up at the bomber or condescend  
To drop her gin and scuttle to a cellar,  
But lean on the mahogany table like a mountain  
Whom only faith can move, and so I send  
O all my faith and all my love to tell her  
That she will move from mourning into morning.



MUNICH ELEGY NUMBER 7

NEVERTHELESS when the hands cross at midnight and noon  
O golden oil spills and from the wheels' mesh  
Time produces its patterns of fate on the flesh,  
And I shall fall out like golden oil from the clash.  
Not then, though, the axle cracks or the wheels veer  
    To miss my skull—  
I feel the jewelled rims riding up my skin  
To leave me drawn and quartered in the rear.

O may I mourn the mathematics of man  
Who when alone is lovely as the solitary tree  
Evolving existence in an algebra of leaves  
Against the thunderstorm and the appalling flash:  
    He is a magnificent one.  
But the many of man makes darkness and deceives  
Each other with shadow, so that none can see  
    The human for the flesh.

Where shall the unicorn rest  
But in this green breast, where  
Mystery is moss and charity is care?  
Where else shall sleep the innocent hind  
    But in this hand,  
Or the lizard and snake lonely from danger  
    But along this finger?

Also Sheffield and South Shields shall rust and rot,  
Northumberland crumble, and Durham moulder,  
Without the forge of his forehead to keep them hot  
And his back to shoulder them.



BARKER

Europe, the jig-saw puzzle, without his great grip  
Collapses through the map,  
And mad America, without his grand insanity,  
Be sane as a cemetery.

But blood's on his head and a gun's in his hand:—  
It's a suicide that he also threatens;  
With a shot of war to put a stop to his grief,  
Whose monument is Europe:  
Where the broken column and the laurel garland,  
The violin that wails as the evening darkens,  
The capital cities lying under gas like a wreath,  
Entomb his hope.

Therefore be generous among friends with kisses,  
Hold parties of domestic dance and song—  
O make the doomed roof ring!  
Join me in celebrating the occasions of bliss  
That turned a condemned home to a ballroom  
Ballooned with laughter and ribboned with love.  
The lights will go out soon  
And the sound of the mooning bomber drone above.



\* D U N S T A N   T H O M P S O N \*

MEMORARE

REMEMBER, at this moment, O somewhere  
The plane falls through the indifferent air,  
No longer flying the about to be dying  
Pilot to any over-the-border disaster, but lying  
Like the boyhood toy, by bad luck destroyed.

*The lost lads are gone*

*God grace them*

Remember how, even now, when the ship sinks,  
The sailor, paler than a pearl, only thinks,  
Diving through destiny to be invested with coral,  
Of himself—saved from the sea caves where no laurel  
Lives—and so gives up a gay ghost at land's end.

*The lost lads are gone*

*God grace them*

Remember, also, as the soldier in amber fires  
Too late, his nerves, swerving on exploded tires,  
Plunge through the past to exhaust their history  
In the silent, never again to be violent mystery,  
Which the womb worshiped more than the hero's tomb.

*The lost lads are gone*

*God grace them*

Remember—do not forget—the numbered, anonymous spy's  
Suddenly surprised, not quite clever enough disguise,

THOMPSON

And see him, neither gallant nor grim, obeying  
The code, sans cipher, of the classroom saying:  
O happy and hallowed to die for a flag.

*The lost lads are gone*

*God grace them*

Remember the enemy, always remembering you,  
Whose heartbreaks heartbeat defeats, who too,  
Shedding tears during prayers for the dead, discovers  
Himself forever alone, the last of his lovers  
Laid low for love, and O at your mercy, murdered.

*The lost lads are gone*

*God grace them*



\* R A L P H G U S T A F S O N \*

TWO SONNETS

1. ON THE STRUMA MASSACRE

Now as these slaughtered seven hundreds hear  
 The vulgar sennet of thine angel sound,  
 Grant, in thy love, that they may see that ground  
 Whose promised acres holy footsteps bear.  
 For they of only this made credulous prayer—  
 Even for whom thy Son the tempest bound  
 And waters walked O not those same where, drowned,  
 Driven by plausible tongues and mute despair,  
 These faithful roll! No not as they, with board  
 And spike, who took Thy sweetness then, do we—  
 Studied in ignorance, and knowing Thee,  
 For Thine archaic crown of thorns and cord,  
 Statistics are become Thine agony,  
 The ocean designate, Gabbatha, Lord.

2. "S.S.R., LOST AT SEA."—*The Times*

What heave of grapnels will resurrect the fabric  
 Of him, oceans drag, whereof he died,  
 Drowning sheer fathoms down, liquid to grab on—  
 Sucked by the liner, violence in her side?  
 Of no more sorrow than a mottled Grief  
 In marble. These fantastic in the murk,  
 Where saltwhite solitary forests leaf,

*GUSTAFSON*

**He swings: the dark anonymously works.  
For who shall count the countless hands and limbs  
In ditch and wall and wave, dead, dead  
In Europe: touch with anguished name and claim  
And actual tear, what must be generally said?  
O let the heart's tough riggings salvage him,  
Only whose lengths can grapple with these dead.**



## \* LAWRENCE DURRELL \*

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 IN ARCADIA

BY DIVINATION came the Dorians,  
 Under a punishment composed an arch.  
 They invented this valley, they taught  
 The rock to flow with odourless water.

Fire and a brute art came among them.

Rain fell, tasting of the sky.  
 Trees grew, composing a grammar.  
 The river, the river you see was brought down  
 By force of prayer upon this fertile floor.

Now small skills: the fingers laid upon  
 The nostrils of flutes, the speech of women  
 Whose tutors were the birds; who singing  
 Now civilised their children with the kiss.

Lastly, the tripod sentenced them.

Ash closed on the surviving sons.  
 The brown bee memorised here, rehearsed  
 Migration from an inherited habit.  
 All travellers recorded an empty zone.

*DURRELL*

Between rocks 'O death,' the survivors.  
O world of bushes eaten like a moon,  
Kissed by the awkward patience of the ant.  
Within a concave blue and void of space.

Something died out by this river: but it seems  
Less than a nightingale ago.



## \* R O Y F U L L E R \*

JANUARY 1940

S W I F T had pains in his head.  
 Johnson dying in bed  
 Tapped the dropsy himself.  
 Blake saw a flea and an elf.  
 Tennyson could hear the shriek  
 Of a bat. Pope was a freak.  
 Emily Dickinson stayed  
 Indoors for a decade.  
 Water inflated the belly  
 Of Hart Crane, and of Shelley.  
 Coleridge was a dope.  
 Southwell died on a rope.  
 Byron had a round white foot.  
 Smart and Cowper were put  
 Away. Lawrence was a fidget.  
 Keats was almost a midget.  
 Donne, alive in his shroud,  
 Shakespeare, in the coil of a cloud,  
 Saw death very well as he  
 Came crab-wise, dark and massy.  
 I envy not only their talents  
 And fertile lack of balance  
 But the appearance of choice  
 In their sad and fatal voice.

FULLER

A WRY SMILE

THE mess is all asleep, my candle burns.  
I hear the rain sharp on the iron roof  
And dully on the broad leaves by the window.  
Already someone moans, another turns  
And, clear and startling, cries "Tell me the truth."

The candle throws my shadow on the wall  
And gilds my books: tonight I'd like to bring  
The poets from their safe and paper beds,  
Show them my comrades and the silver pall  
Over the airfield, ask them what they'd sing.

Not one of them has had to bear such shame,  
Been tortured so constantly by government,  
Has had to draw his life out when the age  
Made happiness a revolution, fame  
Exile, and death the whimsy of a sergeant.

But without envy I remember them,  
And without pity look at my condition:  
I give myself a wry smile in the mirror  
—The poets get a quizzical ahem.  
They reflect time, I am the very ticking:

No longer divided—the unhappy echo  
Of a great fault in civilization; inadequate,  
Perhaps, and sad, but strictly conscious no one  
Anywhere can move, nothing occur,  
Outside my perfect knowledge or my fate.



## THE STATUE

**T**HE noises of the harbour die, the smoke is petrified  
 Against the thick but vacant, fading light, and shadows slide  
 From under stone and iron, darkest now. The last birds glide.

Upon this black-boned, white-splashed, far receding vista of grey  
 Is an equestrian statue, by the ocean, trampling the day,  
 Its green bronze flaked like petals, catching night before the bay.

Distilled from some sad, endless, sordid period of time,  
 As from the language of disease might come a consummate rhyme,  
 It tries to impose its values on the port and on the lime—

The droppings that by chance and from an uncontrollable  
 And savage life have formed a patina upon the skull;  
 Abandoned, have blurred a bodied vision once thought spare but  
 full—

On me, as authority recites to boys the names of queens.  
 Shall I be dazzled by the dynasties, the gules and greens,  
 The unbelievable art, and not recall their piteous means?

Last night I sailed upon that sea whose starting place is here,  
 Evaded the contraptions of the enemy, the mere  
 Dangers of water, saw the statue and the plinth appear.

Last night between the crowded, stifling decks I saw a man,  
 Smoking a big curved pipe, who contemplated his great wan  
 And dirty feet while minute after tedious minute ran—

*FULLER*

This in the city now, whose floor is permanent and still,  
Among the news of history and sense of an obscure will,  
Is all the image I can summon up, my thought's rank kill;

As though there dominated this sea's threshold and this night  
Not the raised hooves, the thick snake neck, the profile, and the  
    might,

The wrought, eternal bronze, the dead protagonist, the fight,

But that unmoving, pale but living shape that drops no tears  
Ridiculous and haunting, which each epoch reappears,  
And is what history is not. O love, O human fears!



HYMN TO TEXTURE

**D**ELIVER us into the hands of quartz,  
Of stalks, of surfaces, give us to color,  
To sea-green and to grass, to blue,  
When trapped in our human life, touch fur.

Place hovering palm on the wet of lilies,  
The nails of our claws on rimless silk,  
Give us up, we will give ourselves, to rapture,  
Swaying like drunkards in sight of milk.

Texture of ozone, and lift of meadows,  
Tactual wonder of clay toned dust,  
Give us the lesson: inanimate nature  
Resolves the animate lust.

Meanwhile our ears on a baffled skull  
Receive the blistering shot: give touch  
To the oval cheek of a deadly shell,  
Caress the unknown future.

IN PANELLED ROOMS

THE love-grip, first excited by the eye,  
Fastens its pleasing mortar; then the thigh  
Moves like a tractor rocketing to fate.  
The head reclines, the mind will gladly wait;  
But pearly blood and sockets made of gum,  
Less than immobile, seek the pleasing hum  
Of fall and exaltation. Eyebrows made  
Of ships and shaped like islands cannot shade  
The walnut hull of eyes, the husk of brown  
Under whose cover lies the kernel-down,  
The certainty of love. Each jointed knee  
Strolls in the wake of new fraternity,  
And wishes elbows well; itself does grace  
To flesh and bone, extracting from its place  
All that made Solomon declare of myrrh,  
Frankincense, flowers, upon touching her.



## THE LUMBERYARD

WE WATCHED our love burn with the lumberyard,  
Bats in their wheeling showed our crazéd sense,  
We stood in fields where weeds with chiggers scrambled,  
And stood the heat flush in our face, immense.

Softly the crowd acclaimed the devastation,  
And we, we smiled to see the embers twist,  
Tottering towers and poles with flashing wires.  
We shifted feet when shifting structures kissed.

Up in the sky the sparks were red stars shuttling,  
Planes with a scout's appetite hung by.  
And at our backs the Negro huts were lit  
With yellow mist, a ghostly gayety.

Sound above all: the cracking and the creaked,  
As bones that, whetted by the warmer flames,  
Edged into death, until the crimson glow  
Vanquished the knotted amber boards, the names.

All banished, all decided, all cast in;  
Far back beyond, the trees made silver white  
By steaming flames, rose as cold piles of cloud  
To cool this mirror of the blazing night.

And we beheld, we watched, as drunk as all,  
And gladdened when the bursting peaked and sprung,  
Rejoiced to see the threat of fire win,  
And sang to see the worthy timbers wrung.

*HERSCHBERGER*

We watched our love burn with the lumberyard,  
Magnificent the sight, the sin, the shame,  
The vice profusely lavished; wheeled the bats  
Silent as we, but crazed, crazed as the flame.



## THE MUSEUM

### 1. CLASSIC

WHO rose up like a goddess from the sea,  
A vision of beauty to haunt so many houses,  
Dies in a marble stasis, gallery goddess.  
And only the prurient children will discern  
How wet flanks gleamed in the sunlight, the very waves  
Shone admiration through the racing foam.

It comes to this: the bleak memorial halls,  
The guide in sour serge, the tired feet,  
And faint through the mausoleum walls the sound  
Of streetcars. These patterns have their meanings far  
From the grove of olive trees, the passionate dancers  
Hot in the frenzy of Etruscan summer.  
It comes to this: the middle-aged on camp chairs  
Sketching those marble limbs that once were love's.

### 2. RENAISSANCE

Princeling in velvet and furs, the fairhaired boy  
With a sly smile and a goblet of gold wine.  
Also the costumed dwarf, the chained falcon,  
The spotted hound arrogant by the throne.  
Such profusion of wealth, such suffocating beauty!  
And all set down with a genius for the rich  
Self-confident detail. But time is traitorous.



## ABRAHAMS

Easily the baize walls confer their apathy.  
Time closes in: an anonymity  
Of dust and varnish. The sly smile will induce  
No further rubies. No emeralds will mingle  
With the stuffed bird, the manuscripts swearing  
Perpetual devotion. No more gold collars  
To please the almost life-like hunting bitch.

### 3. 19TH CENTURY

A grace like swans, and swanlike gleaming at  
The stage's centre, turn and turn again  
Those beautiful dancers. O simple to understand  
The fashionable painter disowning his faubourg  
Of expensive portraits. Simple to understand  
How in an age of dying gods this grace  
Is godlike. Fairer than swans they float in the blue light,  
Over the blue lake hover in a white radiance,  
Glide and fall, rise up, circle, like swans,  
While legato the music calls each swanlike gesture.

O at the instant the complex is simple,  
Time poses no problems, Art is volition,  
But already, poised in the future: the apotheosis  
Of the meatpacker, the thwarted anguish of the slums.

### 4. THE PRESENT

Nothing to paint but what the eye can see.  
The eye sees the broken faces, the cities  
In convulsive disorder, how the bones puncture the flesh,  
How the teeth break from the gums, how the tears fall.

Nothing to paint but what the mind discerns.  
The mind discerns the implacable insects burrowing,  
The fatal complacency of the skyscraper,



## MODERN POETRY

The insects honeycombing final triumph.  
Nothing to paint but what the heart tells.  
The heart tells of love. O still repeats  
Strong in its need and confident, of the young  
Still turning to one another in the dangerous darkness,  
Where the many are hooded and carry knives, where still  
There is one who waits, unarmed, and will be kind and gentle.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The doors are closed. The lights turned down. The dog  
Trots through the galleries sniffing the air  
For some possible intruder. The streetcars creak  
In the night, and the camp chairs are stacked in a storeroom.

O now, surely, the haunting spirit of beauty  
Rises from its long sleep, now surely,  
In the empty silence, delivers its messages.  
The archaic lips open, and reaffirm;  
The fairhaired boy reads in the dim light  
The perpetual parchment and is glad and proud;  
The dancers tremble in a reawakened music;  
And even the wrecked towers have an affirmative meaning:  
Where love whispers softly, heard at last,  
Whispering, consoling, promising: I am Love.

\* S A G I T T A R I U S \*

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Three Rhymes From QUIVER'S CHOICE

1. ALTERNATIVES

FOR the Duce's inflated ideas  
We can offer but two panaceas—  
Either give him Gibraltar,  
Suez, Cyprus, and Malta,  
Or a kick in the Pantellarias.

2. THE REASON

A rather extreme vegetarian,  
Looked down from his summit Bavarian,  
He said: 'It's not odd  
I'm superior to God,  
For the Latter's not even an Aryan.'

3. FRITTO MISTO

*'The Italian race has remained pure  
for the last 2000 years.'*

—*La Difesa della Razza, Rome.*

When Alaric mopped up in Rome  
With his totalitarians,  
Italian dames were not at home  
To visiting barbarians,  
Disdaining to supply the Goth  
With Teuton offspring hardy,



MODERN POETRY

As later they withheld their troth  
From lovesick Langobardi.

Their way was equally abrupt  
With overlords Byzantine,  
Lest Roman blood they might corrupt  
With influence levantine.  
These steadfast virgins spurned like dirt  
The decadent Hellenic,  
And never would so much as flirt  
With Emirs Saracenic.

Invaders of two thousand years,  
Not always of the purest,  
Left fewer racial souvenirs  
Than any summer tourist.  
The mothers of the Coming Race  
Abhorred miscegenation  
And substituted in its place  
Parthenogeneration.

RIVER

THE morning is white  
with the hot frost of elder,  
blizzards of scent  
blind the shuddering walls.

The red flames of lizards  
wiggle out of the ditches  
to suck the black tar  
from the smoking road.

There is thirst on my tongue  
like the powder of fungus,  
my throat is a sandstorm  
of thistle and moth.

O where is the river  
and where are the willows,  
your kisses of hazel  
to sweeten my mouth?

You are that stream  
where the glass fish dazzle  
the flash of their scales  
on the star-blue stones.



*MODERN POETRY*

The heart of cool amber  
in baking granite,  
the motionless lily  
in pools of clay.

Dewdrop of honey,  
moisture of bloom  
in the sweating rose  
and the branded poppy.

O bring me your river,  
your moss-green bridges,  
the bank of your breasts  
with their hill-cold springs;

the voice of the moorhen  
diving under your eyelids  
and your ankles like swans  
in a nest of reeds. . . .

NOTES FOR AN ELEGY

THE alternative to flying is cowardice,  
And what is said against it excuses, excuses;  
Its want was always heavy in those men's bodies  
Who foresaw it in some detail; and failing that,  
The rest were shown through its skyey heats and eases  
In sleep, awoke uncertain whether their waking cry  
Had been falling fear only, or love and falling fear.  
When the sudden way was shown, its possibility  
In terms of the familiar at last shown,  
(How absurdly simple the principle after all!)  
Any tyrant should have sensed it was controversial:  
Instrument of freedom; rights, not Wrights;  
Danger should never be given out publicly.  
The men could easily have been disposed of,  
They and their fragile vehicle. Then the sky  
Would perhaps have darkened, earth shaken, nothing more.  
But in practice the martyrdom has been quiet, statistical,  
A fair price. This is what airmen believe.

The transition to battle was smooth from here.  
Who resents one bond resents another,  
And who has unshouldered earth-restraining hand  
Is not likely to hear out more reasonable tyrannies.



The woods where he died were dark even at sun-up,  
 Oak and long-needle pine that had come together  
 Earlier, and waited for the event at the field's edge.  
 At sunset when the sky behind was gay  
 One had seen the lugubrious shapes of the trees,  
 Bronze and terrible, but had never known the reason,  
 Never thought they were waiting for someone in particular.  
 They took him at night, when they were at their darkest.  
 How they at last convinced him is not known:  
 The crafty engine would not fall for their softness,  
 (Oh, where were you then, six hundred cunning horses?)  
 In the end it had torn hungrily through the brush  
 To lie alone in the desired clearing. Nor the wings;  
 (And you, with your wide silver margin of safety?)  
 They were for the field, surely, where they so often  
 Had eased their load to ground. No, the invitation  
 Must have been sent to the aviator in person:  
 Perhaps a sly suggestion of carelessness,  
 A whispered invitation perhaps to death,  
 Death.

He was not badly disfigured compared to some,  
 But even a little stream of blood where death is  
 Will whimper across a forest floor,  
 Run through the whole forest shouting, shouting.

Him now unpersoned, warm, and quite informal,  
 Dead as alive, raise softly sober interns;  
 Lift gently, God, this wholly airborne one  
 Leads out all his life to this violent wood.

Note that he had not fought one public battle,  
 Met any fascist with his skill, but died  
 As it were in bed, the waste conspicuous;



*MEREDITH*

This is a costly wreck and costly to happen on:  
Praise and humility sound through its siren shrieks,  
And dedication follows in car.

The morning came up foolish with pink clouds  
To say that God counts ours a cunning time.  
Our losses part of an old secret, somehow no loss.



A KODIAK POEM

**P**RECIPITOUS is the shape and stance of the spruce  
Pressed against the mountains in gestures of height,  
Pleasing to Poussin the white and repetitious peaks.

Fonder mountains surely curl around your homeland,  
Fondle the home farms with a warmer green;  
Follow these hills for cold only, or for fool's gold.

Easy winds sweep lengthwise along the known places,  
Essay brittle windows and are turned away;  
Eskimo houses had seal-gut windows that the east-wind drummed.

A fish people now, once fur hunters and fierce,  
Fire-needing, they buried their dead with faggots,  
And when a man went to their hell, he froze.

Remembering the lands before but much more real,  
Look where aloft, you cannot say how except rarely,  
The raven, rich in allusion, rides alone.

THE SOLDIER WALKS UNDER THE TREES  
OF THE UNIVERSITY

THE walls have been shaded for so many years  
By the green magnificence of these great lives  
Their bricks are darkened till the end of time.  
(Small touching whites in the perpetual  
Darkness that saturates the unwall'd world;  
Saved from the sky by leaves, and from the earth by stone)  
The pupils trust like flowers to the shades  
And interminable twilight of these latitudes.

In our zone innocence is born in banks  
And cultured in colonies the rich have sown:  
The one is spared here what the many share  
To write the histories that others are.  
*The oak escapes the storm that broke the reeds,*  
They read here; they read, too, of reeds,  
Of storms; and are, almost, sublime  
In their read ignorance of everything.

The poor are always—somewhere, but not here;  
We learn of them where they and Guilt subsist  
With Death and Evil: in books, in books, in books.  
Ah, sweet to contemplate the causes, not the things!  
The soul learns fortitude in libraries,  
Enduring patience in another's pain,



And pity for the lives we do not change:  
All that the world would be, if it were real.

When will the boughs break blazing from these trees,  
The darkened walls float heavenward like soot?  
The days when men say: "Where we look is fire—  
The iron branches flower in my veins"?  
In that night even to be rich is difficult,  
The world is something even books believe,  
The bombs fall all year long among the states,  
And the blood is black upon the unturned leaves.

\* H U B E R T   C R E E K M O R E \*

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IT'S ME, OH LORD, STANDING WITH A GUN . . .

THEY crouch in the barge and the palms roll close,  
Green echo, high over sand, of waves,  
Of gray jelly-fish in smoke puffs whose  
Invisible sting is swift and leaden.

They crouch, tongue-dry, in the boat,  
And all the world is a puny beach-head:

World of clean-sliced hemispheres,  
Of latitudes of love and crime,  
Peopled with the mental smears  
Of medieval magic, thinning  
To a short horizon  
Under war's tremendous engine.

That glittering hierarchy down  
Through which the war blood streams, and great  
Einsteinian logistics, drown  
Upon this coast of conquest. Here is  
All of war, compact.  
It is simple. It is death-fear.

Undiscriminating death  
Appraises his approaching guests,  
Uniform in gear, beneath  
Which shiver bodies, black and white skinned,



But uniform in value  
As currency of life. Their insight

Penetrates the island's pull,  
Magnetic jointure of here-after.  
Across the rail, the Negro full  
In death's face stares and blinks, beside him  
    Son of owners of slaves,  
Floating to a mortal hyphen, tongue-tied.

And the hyphen joins the puzzled past:  
The tired way down which they came,  
Twin exiles of historic trust—  
And fades in the jungle's blinding chaos.  
    For on that final range  
Men sprawled, too patient in the wave lay,

Letting the gently anxious foam  
Entomb their scars in sand. No scales  
Enamel the minds of two from whom  
All memory soon may flee. The Negro  
    And the Southern man  
Reflect how inner bondage subtly

Links them to oppose what fought  
At home between them: tenant house  
Of jerryed boards, and house it wrought  
Of moonbeam pillars; loom of clod-veined  
    Overalls that wove  
Tradition's silky gown. The drained blood

Mirrors doubly self and war,  
Retreating in the glasses to  
Extinction. The Negro fighting for

CREEKMORE

A freedom fraud, the white for freedom  
Mortgaged to mistrust,  
Fight to shield the bigot's long breed.

And while the boat rolled on the waves,  
Palm surf roaring at their face,  
The Negro felt, not as on slaves,  
The white hand on his arm, and heard him:  
"We can do it, can't we?"  
And some familiar thing was lost words.

The strakes grate on the shore, defy  
Horizon turned foreground of slaughter.  
*Whether I, the Negro, lie  
Here or return, by all these tokens,  
Medals are for white men,  
Jim Crow life for me and my folk.*

Upon the coral shingle they leap  
And rush the smoking jungle. Round  
Their legs the salt-curles break and seep,  
Crumbling soon the mold of foot-prints.  
Streaks of red, shell-studded,  
Blot in sand, in waves are washed mute.



\* A L U N L E W I S \*

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INDIAN DAY

**D**AWN's cold imperative compels  
Bazaars and gutters to disturb  
Famine's casual ugly tableaux.  
Lazarus is lifted from the kerb.

The supple sweeper girl goes by  
Brushing the dung of camels from the street  
The daylight's silver bangles  
Glitter on her naked feet.

II

Yellow ramtilla stiffens in the noon,  
Jackals skulk among the screees,  
In skinny fields the oxen shiver,  
The gods have prophesied disease.

Hedges of spike and rubber, hedges of cactus,  
Lawns of bougainvillia, jasmine, zinnia,  
Terraces of privilege and loathing,  
The masterly shadows of a nightmare

Harden and grow lengthy in the drought.  
The moneyed antipathetic faces  
Converse in courts of pride and fountains  
With ermined sleek injustices.  
Gods and dacoits haunt the mountains.

## III

The sun the thunder and the hunger grow  
Extending stupidly the fields of pain  
Ploughing the peasant under with his crop  
Denying the great mercy of the rain

Denying what each flowering pear and lime  
And every child and each embrace imply—  
The love that is imprisoned in each heart  
By the famines and fortunes of the century.

## IV

Night bibles India in her wilderness  
The Frontier Mail screams blazing with such terror  
The russet tribesman lays aside his flute  
Rigid with Time's hypnotic surging error.

The kindness of the heart lies mute  
Caught in the impotence of dreams  
Yet all night long the boulders sing  
The timeless songs of mountain streams.



IN HOSPITAL: POONA

LAST night I did not fight for sleep  
 But lay awake from midnight while the world  
 Turned its slow features to the moving deep  
 Of darkness, till I knew that you were furl'd,

Beloved, in the same dark watch as I.  
 And sixty degrees of longitude beside  
 Vanished as though a swan in ecstasy  
 Had spanned the distance from your sleeping side.

And like to swan or moon the whole of Wales  
 Glided within the parish of my care:  
 I saw the green tide leap on Cardigan,  
 Your red yacht riding like a legend there,

And the great mountains Dafydd and Llewelyn,  
 Plynlimmon, Cader Idris and Eryri  
 Threshing the darkness back from head and fin,  
 And also the small nameless mining valley

Whose slopes are scratched with streets and sprawling  
 graves  
 Dark in the lap of firwoods and great boulders  
 Where you lay waiting, listening to the waves—  
 My hot hands touched your white despondent shoulders

—And then ten thousand miles of daylight grew  
 Between us, and I heard the wild daws crake  
 In India's starving throat; whereat I knew  
 That Time upon the heart can break  
 But love survives the venom of the snake.



## THE JUNGLE

IN MOLE-BLUE indolence the sun  
Plays idly on the stagnant pool  
In whose grey bed black swollen leaf  
Holds Autumn rotting like an unfrocked priest.  
The crocodile slides from the ochre sand  
And drives the great translucent fish  
Under the boughs across the running gravel.  
Windfalls of brittle mast crunch as we come  
To quench more than our thirst—our selves—  
Beneath this bamboo bridge, this mantled pool  
Where sleep exudes a sinister content  
As though all strength of mind and limb must pass  
And all fidelities and doubts dissolve,  
The weighted world a bubble in each head,  
The warm pacts of the flesh betrayed  
By the nonchalance of a laugh,  
The green indifference of this sleep.

## II

Wandering and fortuitous the paths  
We followed to this rendezvous today  
Out of the mines and offices and dives,  
The sidestreets of anxiety and want,  
Huge cities known and distant as the stars,  
Wheeling beyond our destiny and hope.  
We did not notice how the accent changed  
As shadows ride from precipice to plain  
Closing the parks and cordoning the roads,  
Clouding the humming cultures of the West—



The weekly bribe we paid the man in black,  
 The day shift sinking from the sun,  
 The blinding arc of rivets blown through steel,  
 The patient queues, headlines and slogans flung  
 Across a frightened continent, the town  
 Sullen and out of work, the little home  
 Semi-detached, suburban, transient  
 As fever or the anger of the old,  
 The best ones on some specious pretext gone.

But we who dream beside this jungle pool  
 Prefer the instinctive rightness of the poised  
 Pied kingfisher deep darting for a fish  
 To all the banal rectitude of states,  
 The dew-bright diamonds on a viper's back  
 To the slow poison of a meaning lost  
 And the vituperations of the just.

III

The banyan's branching clerestories close  
 The noon's harsh splendour to a head of light.  
 The black spot in the focus grows and grows:  
 The vagueness of the child, the lover's deep  
 And inarticulate bewilderment,  
 The willingness to please that made a wound,  
 The kneeling darkness and the hungry prayer;  
 Cargoes of anguish in the holds of joy,  
 The smooth deceitful stranger in the heart,  
 The tangled wrack of motives drifting down  
 An oceanic tide of Wrong.  
 And though the state has enemies we know  
 The greater enmity within ourselves.



LEWIS

Some things we cleaned like knives in earth,  
Kept from the dew and rust of Time  
Instinctive truths and elemental love,  
Knowing the force that brings the teal and quail  
From Turkestan across the Himalayan snows  
To Kashmir and the South alone can guide  
That winging wildness home again.

Oh you who want us for ourselves,  
Whose love can start the snow-rush in the woods  
And melt the glacier in the dark coulisse,  
Forgive this strange inconstancy of soul,  
The face distorted in a jungle pool  
That drowns its image in a mort of leaves.

IV

Grey monkeys gibber, ignorant and wise.  
We are the ghosts, and they the denizens;  
We are like them anonymous, unknown,  
Avoiding what is human, near,  
Skirting the villages, the paddy fields  
Where boys sit timelessly to scare the crows  
On bamboo platforms raised above their lives.

A trackless wilderness divides  
Joy from its cause, the motive from the act:  
The killing arm uncurls, strokes the soft moss;  
The distant world is an obituary,  
We do not hear the tappings of its dread.

The act sustains; there is no consequence.  
Only aloneness, swinging slowly  
Down the cold orbit of an older world  
Than any they predicted in the schools,



Stirs the cold forest with a starry wind,  
And sudden as the flashing of a sword  
The dream exalts the bowed and golden head  
And time is swept with a great turbulence,  
The old temptation to remould the world.

The bamboos creak like an uneasy house;  
The night is shrill with crickets, cold with space.  
And if the mute pads on the sand should lift  
Annihilating paws and strike us down  
Then would some unimportant death resound  
With the imprisoned music of the soul?  
And we become the world we could not change?  
Or does the will's long struggle end  
With the last kindness of a foe or friend?

\* J O H N M A N I F O L D \*

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FIFE TUNE

*(6/8) for 6 Platoon, 308th I.T.C.*

ONE morning in Spring  
We marched from Devizes  
All shapes and all sizes  
Like beads on a string,  
But yet with a swing  
We trod the bluemetal  
And full to high fettle  
We started to sing.

She ran down the stair  
A twelve-year-old darling  
And laughing and calling  
She tossed her bright hair;  
Then silent to stare  
At the men flowing past her—  
These were all she could master  
Adoring her there.

It's seldom I'll see  
A sweeter or prettier;  
I doubt we'll forget her  
In two years or three,  
And lucky he'll be  
She takes for a lover  
While we are far over  
The treacherous sea.



\* SIDNEY KEYES \*

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THE BUZZARD

THIS town curled round a hilltop  
 Flattened and steeply canted at the sun  
 Sleeps like a brown snake. The poplars point  
 Tapering shadows, pendula of fate  
 Across the turf. The golden sun revolves  
 On the invisible radius of time  
 And tufts of cloud swim round, dissolving  
 Or reappearing as the currents of the moment  
 Vary up there.

Life swings on its axis  
 In motion centripetal to this sphere  
 Or dust under the burning-glass of sky:  
 This noontide motion spins a kind of peace.  
 Thoughts nuzzle too the crystalline  
 Wall of the curving brain and gape their message  
 Dumbly and flounce away. A caterpillar  
 Measures with looping back a mulberry leaf;  
 This is another way of portioning  
 The endless moment, another demonstration  
 Of time's deceit and the geometry of living.  
 A point projected from the hill's brown arc  
 Draws out its tangent from the central  
 And unexpected angle of a tower;



## KEYES

Then comes to rest in space at last, suspended  
From the sun's further circle as a spider  
Hangs from a twig by unseen filaments.

The buzzard's unreflective eye  
Quick swivelling on its axis, concentrates  
All planes and angles into one great sphere  
Of earth its prey. The terra-cotta town  
Dropped on the hill, generates circles spreading  
To the horizon; rings of green and grey  
Granite or yellow of mimosa thickets  
Spin round the central pivot of his vision.  
Only the quiet eye of water  
Stares back and challenges the symmetry.  
Behind the buzzard's lens, all secrets  
Of beauty or of form unapprehended.  
Life's many meanings blend their rays to one  
Bright spot of cruelty within his brain.  
Buzzard drops down the sky and shadows straddle  
Longer on grass and rock. Now dust clouds rise  
Along the track; a herd of goats stray past;  
Their noise shatters the meaning of the moment  
And breaks the circle of extended peace.  
Why should we wish to hide within the present,  
Hanging above infinity and waiting  
For pain to move, a rabbit in the grass?  
Unfocus rather the too-watchful eye  
And wander singing in the golden haze  
Behind the flock, and take with them your pleasure  
At random from each leaf or twig. So break  
The trance of living symmetry, disprove  
The buzzard's callous theorem of small pain  
And sprawl at last under a myrtle-tree,



***MODERN POETRY***

**Breathing the fleshy odour of its leaves,  
So find a better variant of peace,  
Another meaning and another science  
In nightfall's final clemency of quiet.**

## TIMOSHENKO

HOUR ten he rose, ten-sworded, every finger  
A weighted blade, and strapping round his loins  
The courage of attack, he threw the window  
Open to look on his appointed night.

Where he lay, beneath the winds and creaking flares  
Tangled like lovers or alone assuming  
The wanton postures of the drunk with sleep,  
An army of twisted limbs and hollow faces  
Thrown to and fro between the winds and shadows.  
O hear the wind, the wind that shakes the dawn.  
And there before the night, he was aware  
Of the flayed fields of home, and black with ruin  
The helpful earth under the tracks of tanks.  
His bladed hand, in pity falling, mimicked  
The crumpled hand lamenting the broken plow;  
And the oracular metal lips in anger  
Squared to the shape of the raped girl's yelling mouth.  
He heard the wind explaining nature's sorrow  
And humming in the wire hair of the dead.

He turned, and his great shadow on the wall  
Swayed like a tree. His eyes grew cold as lead.  
Then, in a rage of love and grief and pity,  
He made the pencilled map alive with war.

*September 1942.*



## FROM THE WILDERNESS

**T**HE red rock wilderness  
Shall be my dwelling-place.

Where the wind saws at the bluffs  
And the pebble falls like thunder  
I shall watch the clawed sun  
Tear the rocks asunder.

My seven-branched cactus  
Will never sweat wine:  
My own bleeding feet  
Shall furnish the sign.

The rock says "Endure."  
The wind says "Pursue."  
The sun says "I will suck your bones  
And afterwards bury you."

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

LET me take this other glove off  
As the *vox humana* swells,  
And the beauteous fields of Eden  
Bask beneath the Abbey bells.  
Here, where England's statesmen lie,  
Listen to a lady's cry.

Gracious Lord, oh bomb the Germans.  
Spare their women for Thy Sake,  
And if that is not too easy  
We will pardon Thy Mistake.  
But, gracious Lord, whate'er shall be,  
Don't let anyone bomb me.

Keep our Empire undismembered  
Guide our Forces by Thy Hand,  
Gallant blacks from far Jamaica,  
Honduras and Togoland;  
Protect them Lord in all their fights,  
And, even more, protect the whites.

Think of what our Nation stands for,  
Books from Boots' and country lanes,  
Free speech, free passes, class distinction,  
Democracy and proper drains.



Lord, put beneath Thy special care  
One-eighty-nine Cadogan Square.

Although dear Lord I am a sinner,  
I have done no major crime;  
Now I'll come to Evening Service  
Whensoever I have time.  
So, Lord, reserve for me a crown,  
And do not let my shares go down.

I will labour for Thy Kingdom,  
Help our lads to win the war,  
Send white feathers to the cowards,  
Join the Women's Army Corps,  
Then wash the Steps around Thy Throne  
In the Eternal Safety Zone.

Now I feel a little better,  
What a treat to hear Thy Word,  
Where the bones of leading statesmen,  
Have so often been interr'd.  
And now, dear Lord, I cannot wait  
Because I have a luncheon date.

1940

DEA ROMA

AUGUSTUS mended you. He hung the tongue  
Of Tullius upon your rostrum, lashed  
The money-lenders from your Senate House;  
Then Brutus bled his forty-six percent  
For *Pax Romana*. Quiet as a mouse  
Blood licks your Greek cosmetics with its tongue.

Some years, your legions soldiered through this world  
Under the eagles of Lord Lucifer;  
But human torches lit the soldier home,  
And victims dyed your purple crucifix:  
All of the roads and sewers wound to Rome;  
Satan is pacing up and down the world.

How many butchers and philosophers  
Dirtied the Babylonian purple! Blood  
Ran in through pipes of public aqueducts;  
Vandal patricians squatted on Rome's lid,  
Until Maxentius, floundering in the mud,  
Wiped out the scandal of philosophers.

Now sixteen centuries, Eternal City,  
Are squandered since the inflated pagan flowed  
Under the Milvian Bridge; from the dry Dome  
Of Michelangelo, your Fisherman  
Walks on the waters of a draining Rome  
To bank his catch in the Celestial City.



## CHILDREN OF LIGHT

O<sup>UR</sup> Fathers wrung their bread from stocks and stones  
And fenced their gardens with the Redman's bones;  
Embarking from the Nether Land of Holland,  
Pilgrims unhouseled by Geneva's night,  
You planted here the Serpent's seeds of light;  
And here the pivoting searchlights probe to shock  
The riotous glass houses built on rock,  
And candles gutter in a hall of mirrors,  
And light is where the ancient blood of Cain  
Is burning, burning the unburied grain.

ON THE EVE OF THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE  
CONCEPTION 1942

MOTHER of God, whose burly love  
Turns swords to plowshares, come, improve  
On the big wars  
And make this holiday with Mars  
Your Feast Day, while Bellona's bluff  
Courage or call it what you please  
Plays blindman's buff  
Through virtue's knees.

Freedom and Eisenhower have won  
Significant laurels where the Hun  
And Roman kneel  
To lick the dust from Mars' bootheel  
Like foppish bloodhounds; yet you sleep  
Out our distemper's evil day  
And hear no sheep  
Or hangdog bay!

Bring me tonight no axe to grind  
On wheels of the Utopian mind:  
Six thousand years  
Cain's blood has drummed into my ears,  
Shall I wring plums from Plato's bush  
When Burma's and Bizerte's dead  
Must puff and push  
Blood into bread?

Oh, if soldiers mind you well  
They shall find you are their belle



*MODERN POETRY*

And belly too;  
Christ's bread and beauty came by you,  
Celestial Hoyden, when our Lord  
Gave up the weary Ghost and died,  
    You shook a sword  
    From his torn side.

Over the seas and far away  
They feast the fair and bloody day  
    When mankind's Mother,  
Jesus' Mother, like another  
Nimrod danced on Satan's head.  
The old Snake lopes to his shelled hole;  
    Man eats the Dead  
    From pole to pole.

## WHERE THE RAINBOW ENDS

I SAW the sky descending, black and white  
 Not blue, on Boston where the winters wore  
 The occidental death's heads from the slates  
 And Hunger's skin and bone retrievers tore  
 The chickadee and shrike. The thorn-tree waits  
 Its victim and tonight  
 Arson will eat the deadwood to the foot  
 Of Ararat: The scythers, Time and Death,  
 Helmed locusts, move upon the tree of breath;  
 The wild ingrafted olive and the root

Are withered, and a winter drifts to where  
 The Pepperpot, ironic rainbow, spans  
 Charles River and its scales of scorched-earth miles,  
 The tree-dabbed suburb where construction plans  
 The wrath of God. About the Chapel, piles  
 Of dead leaves char the air,  
 And I am a red arrow on this graph  
 Of revelations. Every dove is sold,  
 The Chapel's sharp-skinned eagle shifts its hold  
 On Serpent-Time, the Rainbow's epitaph.

In Boston serpents whistle at the cold.  
 The victim climbs the altar-steps and sings:  
 "Hosannah to the lion, lamb and beast  
 Who fans the furnace-fire of Is with wings:  
 I breathe the ether of my marriage-feast."  
 At the unhouseled table, gold



*MODERN POETRY*

And a fair cloth. I kneel and the wings beat  
My cheek. What can the dove of Jesus give  
You now but wisdom, exile? Stand and live,  
The dove has brought an olive-branch to eat.



CARON, NON TI CRUCCIARE

*"And with Him they crucify two thieves, the one on  
His right hand, the other on His left."*

I

MY BEAUTY is departed: they will square  
My hands and feet, and Omar's coarse-hair tent  
Towers above the Kedron's Torrent, Sent,  
Ben Himnon and the hide-bound outlands where  
The little fox runs shivering to its lair,  
Fearful lest the short-sighted Orient  
Mistake it for this shambles of dissent  
Where the red victims of the gallows stare  
And dazzle the trenched highways with their blood.  
My brothers, if I call you brothers, see:  
The blood of Abel, crying from the dead  
Sticks to my shaven skull and eyes. What good  
Are *lebensraum* and bread to Israel dead  
And rotten on the cross-beams of the Tree?

II

This is the hour of darkness and the clocks  
Of Heaven bawl and falter and the Ram  
Kicks over his loose traces, earthquake rocks  
The stolid temple of Jerusalem,  
Whose cornerstone is rocking with a will  
To scatter Jew and Roman to the wind;  
The wolves steal up on tiptoe for the kill.  
Our beauty is departed. All have sinned.  
We are a chosen people. Satan, be still;  
We huddled against the gallows lest we die.



O why did God climb out on this bald hill,  
That Young Man, worse than prodigal, and lie  
Upon the gallows of our brotherhood?  
The wolves go round in circles in the wood.

III

I wandered footloose in the wastes of Nod  
And damned the day and age when I was born.  
I weary of this curse, Almighty God,  
Which solely falls on my cleft heel and horn;  
My shepherd brother led the lepers back  
To Jordan. Then I strayed to Babylon  
Where gold-dust sands the sidewalks, lost the track  
Of Abel through the fallow to thy Son.  
Here merchants trim the sheep and goats in mills  
Where woolen turns to gold and dollar bills:  
The merchants snare us in the golden net  
Of Mammon. O Jerusalem, I said,  
If I forget thee, may my hand forget  
Her cunning. Let the stranger eat my bread.

IV

"There is a woman, if you find her, Son,"  
My worldly father whispered, "Where each street  
Bubbles and bursts with houses of concrete,  
There you shall know the whore of Babylon."  
In this way Cain's instruction was begun,  
Mother of God, before I could repeat  
An *Ave* or know the fabulous clay feet  
Of Babylon are dynamite and gun;  
Mother of God, I lie here without bail.  
Instruct a lasher of the sheep and goat  
In Jonah, who three nights of midnights lay



## LOWELL

Buried inside the belly of the whale,  
Then, grappling Nineveh by its mule's throat,  
Hauled a great city to the Scapegoat's hay.

### V

Behind his sliding window, Dives sits  
To turn out Lazarus, if he should knock;  
Wealth is a weighty sorrow. But my wits  
Are addled by the sepulchre, the rock,  
By splinters of the Godhead in a head  
That knows the devils Saul and Joshua smote  
From Salem repossess their old homestead  
And keep up open-house to feast the Goat;  
O tame and uniform conceits of man  
And human reason, you should light the night  
By burning! Goat-foot Satan, I have lain,  
Clutching my nothing close as death, tonight  
And heard you hooting, when our women ran;  
Your goat horns rattle on the whited pane.

### VI

We saw Mount Sinai and the Holy Land  
In Egypt, compound of black earth and green  
Between a powdered mountain and red sand  
Scoured by the silver air-lines: we have seen  
The sworded Seraphim, the serpent-tree,  
The apple, once more distant than light-years,  
Falling like burning brands about our ears.  
The hydra-headed delta choked with sea;  
On that sarcophagus of the Nile's mud  
And mummies, the Destroyer clamped a lid,  
Weightier than King Cheops' pyramid,—  
Coffin within a coffin. In whose blood,



Or Jordan, will our spiked and burdened hands  
Cup water for a mummy and his lands?

VII

But peace, in Israel bearded elders keep  
The peace as they have always kept it. No  
Wolves break into these pastures where the sheep  
Wait for the hireling hind to shear them. O  
People, let us sleep out this night in peace.  
Jehovah nods, the doors of Janus slam,  
Cocks on the weathervanes will never cease  
Crowing for our defilement of the Lamb.  
Lamb in the manger, come into our house:  
Here you may find and buy all you can eat,  
Dirt cheap. On high, till cockcrow, Lord of Hosts,  
The gallows' bird is singing to his spouse,  
And mad-cap Lamb is gambolling in the street  
And splatters blood on the polluted posts.

VIII

Virgil, who heralded this golden age,  
Unctuous with olives of perpetual peace,  
Had heard the cackle of the Capitol Geese,  
And Caesar toss the sponge and patronage  
Of Empire to his prostituted page.  
The gold is tarnished and the geese are grease,  
Jason has stripped the sheep for golden fleece,  
The last brass hat has banged about the stage.  
But who will pipe a new song? In our land  
Caesar has given his scarlet coat away.  
But who will pipe a new song? In our land  
Caesar has given his crown of thorns away.  
But who will pipe the young sheep back to fold?  
Caesar has cut his throat to kill the cold.



## IX

God is my shepherd and looks after me.  
 See how I hang. My bones eat through the skin  
 And flesh they carried here upon the chin  
 And lipping clutch of their cupidity;  
 Now here, now there, the sparrow and the sea  
 Gull splinter the groined eyeballs of my sin,  
 Caesar, more beaks of birds than needles in  
 The fathoms of the Bayeux Tapestry;  
 Our beauty is departed. Who'll discuss  
 Our scandal, for we are terror and speak:  
 "Remember how the Dove came down to us,  
 Broke through your armor of imperial bronze  
 And beat with olive-branch and bleeding beak  
 And picked the Lord's Anointed to the bones."

## X

I made this Babel. Pushed against the wall,  
 With splintered hands and knees and sky-sick blood,  
 I pieced together scaffolding, O God,  
 To swing my cloven heels into the tall  
 Third heaven of heavens, where the Prophet Paul  
 Fathoms that Jacob's Ladder is the wood  
 Of Christ the Goat, whose hanging is too good  
 For my unnourished horns, gone wooden, all  
 Splintered. God even of the goats, that was:  
 The fearful night is over and the mist  
 Is clearing from the undemolished shore  
 Of Paradise, where homing angels pass  
 With the dunged sheep into the manger. Christ  
 Swings from this Tower of Babel to the floor.



\* D E M E T R I O S C A P E T A N A K I S \*

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## ABEL

MY BROTHER Cain, the wounded, liked to sit  
 Brushing my shoulder by the staring water  
 Of life, or death, in cinemas half-lit  
 By scenes of peace that always turned to slaughter.

He liked to talk to me. His eager voice  
 Whispered the puzzle of his bleeding thirst,  
 Or prayed me not to make my final choice  
 Unless we had a chat about it first.

And then he chose the final pain for me.  
 I do not blame his nature: he's my brother;  
 Nor what you call the times: our love was free,  
 Would be the same at any time; but rather

The ageless ambiguity of things,  
 Which makes our life mean death, our love be hate.  
 My blood that streams across the bedroom sings  
 "I am my brother opening the gate."

LAZARUS

**T**HIS knock means death. I heard it once before  
As I was struggling to remember one,  
Just one thing, crying in my fever for  
Help, help. Then the door opened, yet no Son

Came in to whisper what I had to know.  
Only my sisters wetted me with tears,  
But tears are barren symbols. Love is slow,  
And when she comes she neither speaks nor hears;

She only kisses and revives the dead  
Perhaps in vain. Because what is the use  
Of miracles unheard-of, since instead  
Of trying to remember the great News

Revealed to me alone by Death and Love,  
I struggled to forget them and become  
Like everybody else? I longed to move  
As if I never had been overcome

By mysteries which made my sisters shiver  
As they prepared the supper for our Friend.  
He came and we received Him as the Giver,  
But did not ask Him when our joy would end.

And now I hear the knock I heard before,  
And strive to make up for the holy time,  
But I cannot remember, and the door  
Creaks letting in my unambiguous crime.



\* T H O M A S M E R T O N \*

THE TRAPPIST ABBEY: MATINS

*Our Lady of Gethsemani, Kentucky*

WHEN the full fields begin to smell of sunrise  
And the valleys sing in their sleep,  
The pilgrim moon pours over the solemn darkness  
Her waterfalls of silence,  
And then departs, up the long avenue of trees.

The stars hide, in the glade, their light, like tears,  
And tremble where some train runs, lost,  
Baying in eastward mysteries of distance.  
Where fire flares, somewhere, over a sink of cities.

Now kindle in the windows of this ladyhouse, my soul,  
Your childish, clear awokeness:  
Burn in the country night  
Your wise and sleepless lamp.  
For, from the frowning tower, the windy belfry,  
Sudden the bells come, bridegrooms,  
And fill the echoing dark with love and fear.

Wake in the windows of Gethsemani, my soul, my sister,  
For the past years, with smokey torches, come,  
Bringing betrayal from the burning world  
And bloodying the glade with pitch flame.

*MERTON*

Wake in the cloisters of the lonely night, my soul, my sister,  
Where the apostles gather, who were, one time, scattered,  
And mourn God's blood in the place of His betrayal,  
And weep with Peter at the triple cock-crow.



## FOR MY BROTHER

*Reported Missing in Action, 1943*

SWEET brother, if I do not sleep  
 My eyes are flowers for your tomb;  
 And if I cannot eat my bread,  
 My fasts shall live like willows where you died.  
 If in the heat I find no water for my thirst,  
 My thirst shall turn to springs for you, poor traveller.

Where, in what desolate and smokey country,  
 Lies your poor body, lost and dead?  
 And in what landscape of disaster  
 Has your unhappy spirit lost its road?

Come, in my labor find a resting place  
 And in my sorrows lay your head,  
 Or rather take my life and blood  
 And buy yourself a better bed—  
 Or take my breath and take my death  
 And buy yourself a better rest.

When all the men of war are shot  
 And flags have fallen into dust,  
 Your cross and mine shall tell men still  
 Christ died on each, for both of us.

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,  
 And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:  
 The money of Whose tears shall fall  
 Into your weak and friendless hand,

*MERTON*

And buy you back to your own land:  
The silence of Whose tears shall fall  
Like bells upon your alien tomb.  
Hear them and come: they call you home.



\* K A R L S H A P I R O \*

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 AUTO WRECK

ITS quick soft silver bell beating, beating,  
 And down the dark one ruby flare  
 Pulsing out red light like an artery,  
 The ambulance at top speed floating down  
 Past beacons and illuminated clocks  
 Wings in a heavy curve, dips down,  
 And brakes speed, entering the crowd.  
 The doors leap open, emptying light;  
 Stretchers are laid out, the mangled lifted  
 And stowed into the little hospital.  
 Then the bell, breaking the hush, tolls once,  
 And the ambulance with its terrible cargo  
 Rocking, slightly rocking, moves away,  
 As the doors, an afterthought, are closed.

We are deranged, walking among the cops  
 Who sweep glass and are large and composed.  
 One is still making notes under the light.  
 One with a bucket douches ponds of blood  
 Into the street and gutter.  
 One hangs lanterns on the wrecks that cling,  
 Empty husks of locusts, to iron poles.

Our throats were tight as tourniquets,  
 Our feet were bound with splints, but now,

Like convalescents intimate and gauche,  
We speak through sickly smiles and warn  
With the stubborn saw of common sense,  
The grim joke and the banal resolution.  
The traffic moves around with care,  
But we remain, touching a wound  
That opens to our richest horror.  
Already old, the question Who shall die?  
Becomes unspoken Who is innocent?  
For death in war is done by hands;  
Suicide has cause and stillbirth, logic;  
And cancer, simple as a flower, blooms.  
But this invites the occult mind,  
Cancels our physics with a sneer,  
And spatters all we know of dénouement  
Across the expedient and wicked stones.



## THE FLY

O HIDEOUS little bat, the size of snot,  
 With polyhedral eye and shabby clothes,  
 To populate the stinking cat you walk  
 The promontory of the dead man's nose,  
 Climb with the fine leg of a Duncan-Phyfe  
     The smoking mountains of my food  
     And in a comic mood  
 In mid-air take to bed a wife.

Riding and riding with your filth of hair  
 On gluey foot or wing, forever coy,  
 Hot from the compost and green sweet decay,  
 Sounding your buzzer like an urchin toy—  
 You dot all whiteness with diminutive stool,  
     In the tight belly of the dead  
     Burrow with hungry head  
     And inlay maggots like a jewel.

At your approach the great horse stomps and paws  
 Bringing the hurricane of his heavy tail;  
 Shod in disease you dare to kiss my hand  
 Which sweeps against you like an angry flail;  
 Still you return, return, trusting your wing  
     To draw you from the hunter's reach  
     That learns to kill to teach  
 Disorder to the tinier thing.

My peace is your disaster. For your death  
 Children like spiders cup their pretty hands  
 And wives resort to chemistry of war.

In fens of sticky paper and quicksands  
You glue yourself to death. Where you are stuck  
    You struggle hideously and beg  
        You amputate your leg  
Imbedded in the amber muck.

But I, a man, must swat you with my hate,  
Slap you across the air and crush your flight,  
Must mangle with my shoe and smear your blood,  
Expose your little guts pasty and white,  
Knock your head sidewise like a drunkard's hat,  
    Pin your wings under like a crow's,  
        Tear off your flimsy clothes  
And beat you as one beats a rat.

Then like Gargantua I stride among  
The corpses strewn like raisins in the dust,  
The broken bodies of the narrow dead  
That catch the throat with fingers of disgust.  
I sweep. One gyrates like a top and falls  
    And stunned, stone blind, and deaf  
        Buzzes its frightful F  
And dies between three cannibals.



## NIGGER

**A**ND did ever a man go black with sun in a Belgian swamp,  
On a feathery African plain where the sunburnt lioness lies,  
And a cocoanut monkey grove where the cockatoos scratch the  
skies,

And the zebras striped with moonlight grasses gaze and stomp?

With a swatch of the baboon's crimson bottom cut for a lip,  
And a brace of elephant ivories hung for a tusky smile,  
With the muscles as level and lazy and long as the lifting Nile,  
And a penis as loaded and supple and limp as the slaver's whip?

Are you beautiful still when you walk downtown in a knife-cut  
coat

And your yellow shoes dance at the corner curb like a brand new  
car,

And the buck with the arching pick looks over the new-laid tar  
As you cock your eye like a cuckoo bird on a two-o'clock note?

When you got so little in steel-rim specs, when you caught that  
French,

When you wrote that book and you made that speech in the bot-  
tom south,

When you beat that fiddle and sang that role or Othello's mouth,  
When you blew that horn for the shirt-sleeve mob and the snaky  
wench?

When you boxed that hun, when you raped that trash that you  
didn't rape,

When you caught that slug with a belly of fire and a face of gray,

When you felt that loop and you took that boot from a KKK,  
And your hands hung down and your face went out in a blast of  
grape?

Did the Lord say yes, did the Lord say no, did you ask the Lord  
When the jaw came down, when the cotton blossomed out of your  
bones?

Are you coming to peace, O Booker T. Lincoln Roosevelt Jones,  
And is Jesus riding to raise your wage and to cut that cord?



## THE LEG

**A**MONG the iodoform, in twilight-sleep,  
*What have I lost?* he first inquires,  
Peers in the middle distance where a pain,  
Ghost of a nurse, hastily moves, and day,  
Her blinding presence pressing in his eyes  
And now his ears. They are handling him  
With rubber gloves. He wants to get up.

One day beside some flowers near his nose  
He will be thinking, *When will I look at it?*  
And pain, still in the middle distance, will reply,  
*At what?* and he will know it's gone,  
O where! and begin to tremble and cry,  
He will begin to cry as a child cries  
Whose puppy is mangled under a screaming wheel.

Later, as if deliberately, his fingers  
Begin to explore the stump. He learns a shape  
That is comfortable and tucked in like a sock.  
This has a sense of humor, this can despise  
The finest surgical limb, the dignity of limping,  
The nonsense of wheel-chairs. Now he smiles to the wall.  
The amputation becomes an acquisition.

For the leg is wondering where he is (all is not lost)  
And surely he has a duty to the leg;  
He is its injury, the leg is his orphan,  
He must cultivate the mind of the leg,  
Pray for the part that is missing, pray for peace

In the image of man, pray, pray for its safety,  
And after a little it will die quietly.

The body, what is it, Father, but a sign  
To love the force that grows us, to give back  
What in Thy palm is senselessness and mud?  
Knead, knead the substance of our understanding  
Which must be beautiful in flesh to walk,  
That if Thou take me angrily in hand  
And hurl me to the shark, I shall not die!



## FROM ESSAY ON RIME

### 1. FORM

FORM is the build of any organism  
Living or dead, of a whole tree or a leaf,  
A whole poem or a word. In prosody,  
Where all is motion, form is the interaction  
Of all the parts of rhythm that produce  
The sensory effect of single rhythm. In past  
Eras of art the chief preoccupation  
Was not with craft, not with mechanics, but  
With the end-product, its effect and use.  
Some time in our grandfather's generation  
Rime took to looking at itse'f as form,  
X-rayed its own anatomy, discussed  
The trend of art toward science, until by dint  
Of hypnotism a means became an end.

### 2. SPEECH AND POETRY

In one of the most widely circulated  
Anthologies of current rime, a speech,  
The actual peroration of a man  
Fated to die, is set within the text  
Beside the most exemplary and abstruse  
Of modern poems. Vanzetti's broken English  
Seen in the context of self-conscious art  
In company with the works of gifted minds  
At perfect ease, argues a new confusion.  
By what philosophy the editor  
Attempts to hold this tragic martyred thing  
A hostage to the literary cause



Is, in a sense, our present argument.  
 For much of modern rime denotes this bent  
 To cancel out the distance and the line  
 Between the language of spontaneous nature  
 And that of formal artifice. So basic  
 A solecism cries out for explanation.

Compare the plea for innocence in a play,  
 Bassanio's for instance with the words  
 Vanzetti used before the New England court.  
 One lives and dies in the imagination;  
 Its reference to existence is oblique  
 And only by suggestion can impinge  
 Upon the behavior of the audience  
 The other is what the audience knows as *real*,  
 A fact of the statistical world, as like  
 An actor's agonizing as true blood  
 To a splash of crimson paint upon a dress.  
 Our editor pursues the rule of thumb  
 Allowed by poets themselves in his collection.

### 3. THE RATIO OF RIME TO LANGUAGE

I do not here attempt the definition  
 Of rime, which is the province of esthetics,  
 But to point out its ratio to language.  
 In the mathematical sense, rime is a power,  
 Prose raised to the numerical exponent  
 Of three or six or even  $n$ , depending  
 Upon the propensity of the literature  
 At a particular time and on the bent  
 Of the particular poet. It is therefore  
 A heightening and a measure of intensity.



## MODERN POETRY

In the physical sense, rime is the nuclear  
And vital element of speech and prose,  
The very protoplasm of the tongue,  
Or that organic substance which survives  
The structures it creates. Words are as lives,  
Deaths and mutations, and the poet learns  
Through search for life, the biology of rime.  
In the cheological sense, rime is  
    the ghost  
And prose the flesh of language. Poets may boast  
That they have known the mystic rose of good,  
The blessed face of truth, the host of beauty;  
They press the oil and elevate the wine,  
For poetry like philosophy is divine  
And wells up from the uncreated will.

### 4. BELIEF AND POETRY

Belief, it may be, is fortuitous  
In rime; there are perhaps as many poets  
Who shrug heir shoulders at the word as there  
Are those who clutch it like a talisman.  
Shakespeare, we think, believed in God and country  
And the nobility of man. What else?  
The greatest poet has left us no account  
Of his theology or his metaphysics;  
This in our day is almost tantamount  
To calling him a fool or a barbarian.  
Certain it is that we regard belief  
As the tap-root of art. So various  
And multifoliate are our breeds of faith  
That we could furnish a herbarium  
With the American specimens alone.

## 5. THE POETRY OF IDEAS

One need but ask Where is the literature  
Of nature, where the love poem and the plain  
Statement of feeling? How and when and why  
Did we conceive our horror for emotion,  
Our fear of beauty? Whence the isolation  
And proud withdrawal of the intellectual  
Into the cool control-room of the brain?  
At what point in the history of art  
Has such a cleavage between audience  
And poet existed? When before has rime  
Relied so heavily on the interpreter,  
The analyst and the critic? Finally how  
Has poetry as the vision of the soul  
Descended to the poetry of sensation,  
And that translated to the perceptive kind,  
Evolved into the poetry of ideas?





## \* APPENDIX \*

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**WILLIAM ABRAHAM** was born in Boston in 1919. At Harvard, from which he was graduated in 1941, he edited the *Advocate*, studied under Robert Hillyer, was twice awarded the Lloyd McKim Garrison poetry prize. He was associated with Dunstan Thompson and Harry Brown on the editorial staff of *Vice Versa* when inducted into the Army in 1942. There he wrote his first novel, *Interval in Carolina* (1945) and began his second, *By the Beautiful Sea*. His few published poems appear to affirm the future through a Rilkean recreation and rejection of the past.

**JAMES AGEE** was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1909. His first book, with a foreword by Archibald MacLeish was published in 1934 by the Yale University Press. Its title, *Permit Me Voyage*, is taken from the last line of one of Hart Crane's "Voyages." After graduation from Harvard in 1932 Agee came to New York, joining that remarkable coterie of poets and free-thinkers, the editorial staff of *Fortune*. His verse, ornate as any Elizabethan's, is nevertheless pungent with an imagery struck from contemporary flint. His prose (*Let us now Praise Famous Men*, 1941) is unique for its orchestration of fury and humility, its self-consciousness of guilt and its splendor of observation. In recent years Agee has contributed a column, "Films," to *The Nation*.

**CONRAD AIKEN**, equally distinguished as poet, critic and anthologist, was born in Georgia in 1889. After graduation from Harvard, he lived in Massachusetts until 1921; thereafter, until very recently, in Sussex, England. His novels, like his poems, are concerned with psychological prob-



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lems. The mood, generally, is nostalgic. His *Selected Poems*, 1929, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. During the war Aiken returned to Massachusetts and wrote a civilian's tribute to G.I. tribulations entitled *The Soldier*.

W. H. AUDEN is the strongest and most versatile member of that generation of English poets, including Spender and Day Lewis, which first made its voice heard at Oxford in the thirties. He was born in 1907; has taught school; was first a Marxist, then a seeker after religious certainty; did journalistic service for the Spanish Loyalist and Chinese causes; received the King's Prize for poetry in 1937 from George VI; in 1939 came to the United States, becoming a citizen in 1946. Auden's style, the equipment of a major poet, is a highly personal blend of Byronic wit and Freudian symbolism; yet when he wishes to (witness the poem "Prologue") he can employ rhetoric in the grand manner. In addition to his poems, and his plays (with Christopher Isherwood), Auden is the co-author of the entertaining travel-diary, *Letters from Iceland* (with Louis MacNeice), and has edited several anthologies. His *Collected Poems* were published in 1945.

GEORGE BARKER'S first book, *Poems*, was published in 1933 in London. After the incumbency of William Empson, he went to Japan as a teacher in the Imperial University at Tokyo, returning to England during the war by way of the United States as Empson had done, and spending some time in New York with Oscar Williams. The poems in his later books, *Calamiterror*, *Munich Elegies* and *Lament and Triumph* reveal a preoccupation with Freud and a virtuosity in expressing the world's crises in terms of sex symbolism that does not always avoid vulgarity. Barker's metrical skill is capable of containing his lurid vocabulary in strict patterns, but the idea is often lost in the ambiguities of rhetoric.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT, born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1898, published a vigorous collection of poetic monologues, *Fire Men and Pompey*, before he entered Yale in 1916. Producing in quick succession



novels, ballads and short stories, he made a great name for himself in 1928 with the appearance of the novel-length narrative poem *John Brown's Body*. Although perhaps the most popular poem of our time (it has sold 169,000 copies and is still selling), *John Brown's Body* does not contain its author's best work—that combination of metrical experiment, elfish humor and social indignation which made *Burning City*, 1936, memorable. Benét's *Western Star* appeared in 1943, the year of his death.

**WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT**, the elder brother of Stephen Vincent, was born in 1886 and graduated from Yale in 1907. He served in the First World War, and in 1924 helped to found the *Saturday Review of Literature* of which he is still the poetry editor. In addition to his poetry (the most characteristic experiments and ballads are to be found in the collection *Man Possessed*, 1927), Benét edited the posthumous *Collected Poems* of his second wife, Elinor Wylie.

**JOHN BETJEMAN**, poet-satirist and architectural draftsman, was born in England in 1906. Author of *Ghastly Good Taste*, *Continual Dew* and *Old For New Chancels*, the poem in this collection first appeared in *The New Statesman & Nation*, where it was immediately attacked by a Church journal as characteristic of the liberal weekly's "anti-Christian attitude." The author replied that "Of course the poem is written from a Christian standpoint and is a satire on the sort of person who turns God into a wishing-well for preserving the *status quo*." Betjeman's verses have been highly praised by Evelyn Waugh and W. H. Auden, among others.

**JOHN PEALE BISHOP** was born in 1892 and died in 1944. His first book, *The Undertaker's Garland*, was written in collaboration with his friend Edmund Wilson. His poems appeared in *Now with his Lore* (1933) and *Minute Particulars* (1935). His *Selected Poems* were published in 1941. His poetry, from the earlier imagist exercises to the later more sensual and ambitious pieces, is delicate, aristocratic and classical.



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LOUISE BOGAN says she has looked for privacy and anonymity in her life, and her poetry reflects this search. The intricacy of feeling in her lyrics is polished by a brilliant craftsmanship to an almost frozen but classic impersonalness. Of Irish descent, she was born in Maine, studied for a year at Boston University, married in 1916 and again in 1925, has written the poetry reviews in the *New Yorker* and is presently Curator of Poetry at the Library of Congress. Her poems appeared in *Body of This Death* (1923), *Dark Summer* (1929), *The Sleeping Fury* (1937) and *Poems and New Poems* (1941).

KAY BOYLE's poetry, on which she herself sets an inadequate value, is less intellectualized than her novels and stories, equally experimental; it is also, for one who has spent much of her life as an expatriate in France, strongly American. The best of it appeared in *A Glad Day* (1938) and in a long poem on flight which Miss Boyle has never completed. Its author acknowledges the influence of Lola Ridge with whom she worked on *Broom*, and the encouragement of Eugene Jolas, who published some of it in *transition*. Miss Boyle's prose works for which she is better known include *Wedding Day and Other Stories* (1929); *Plagued by the Nightingale* (1930); *the Crazy Hunter* (1940) and *Armistice Diary* (1942). Born in Minnesota in 1903, she is presently living with her six children in New York City.

R. P. BLACKMUR was born in Massachusetts in 1904, of Scotch descent. He was one of the group at Harvard who with Lincoln Kirstein and Varian Fry founded and edited *The Hound and Horn* in 1929. He worked on the *Kenyon Review* for a while and then came to the Creative English department at Princeton at the call of Allen Tate, where he still teaches. Blackmur's criticism, which goes in strong for "line-by-line" analysis and an almost microscopic weighing of "sensibility" is not at all like his poetry, which has a rough vigor and a healthy emphasis on primary emotions. The criticism is collected in *The Double Agent* (1935) and *The Expense of Greatness* (1940), the poetry in *From Jordan's Delight* (1938) and *The Second World* (1942).



**ROBERT BRIDGES**, born in England in 1844 and educated at Oxford, was Poet Laureate from 1913 until his death in 1930. His lyrics, as well as his ambitious long poem, *The Testament of Beauty*, are distinguished by their conventional, pietistic subject-matter, and by a style, which, though subtle, is so deliberately patterned after classical models as to approach pedantry. He discovered Gerard Manley Hopkins in the eighties without fully understanding his genius, and edited the first collection of that poet's work.

**ROY CAMPBELL** was born in Natal, South Africa, in 1902. A latter-day Byron with the vitality of a major poet, the violence of *The Flaming Terrapin*, the satire of *The Georgiad* and the symbolism of *Adamastor* led Edith Sitwell to hail him as "a poetic tornado" and his many admirers in England to hope that a stricter discipline and a larger, more democratic vision would fulfill his promise. Instead Campbell, who had already won a reputation as a professional bullfighter and as the steer-throwing champion of Provence (1932-3), became the slave of his egotism, his worship of action and his passion for authority. In 1935 he joined the Catholic Church. Throughout the Spanish Civil War he fought with Franco's forces and is now living in Toledo. His last volume of poems, published in 1939, was appropriately entitled *Flowering Rifle*.

**DEMETRIOS CAPETANAKIS** died in England in 1944, aged 32. He had left his native Greece in 1939, learning, as by a miracle, to write English poetry of the first order, and had become a legendary figure even before his death. Once a disciple of Stefan George, the reading of Thomas Gray convinced him that the German poet's mind "was too much of one piece to understand the dialectic mystery of existence, whose reality is born of nothingness, whose light comes from darkness, whose greatest hope is brought about by utmost despair." "Nothingness," he had written in his essay on Rimbaud, "might save or destroy those who face it, but those who ignore it are condemned to unreality," and it was the genius of English poetry, he came to realize, that it questioned everything to the point where



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‘the truth of something in man’s existence, revealed by suffering and the awareness of nothingness,’ became unquestionable. When Capetanakis’ half-dozen essays and a like number of poems are brought together in book form by his friend John Lehmann it will be revealed how overpowering and fruitful this doctrine was both in his criticism and his poetry. He wanted his poetry above all to be *disturbing*, and this is exactly the quality of “Abel” with its terrifying depth of pity for Cain whose “eager voice/ Whispered the puzzle of his bleeding thirst,” and of “Emily Dickinson” with its opening stanzas:

I stand like a deserted church  
That would much rather be  
A garden with a hopping bird,  
Or with a humming bee.

I did not want eternity,  
I only begged for time:  
In the trim head of chastity  
The bells of madness chime . . .

LEWIS CARROLL, the pen-name of the mathematician, C. L. Dodgson, is as well known to the world as his masterpiece, *Alice in Wonderland*. He was born in Cheshire, England, in 1832 and died in 1898. The immortal nonsense rhyme included in this volume has contributed at least four new words of common usage to the language—and it is still a treasury.

EUNICE CLARK (Mrs. John Knox Jessup) was born in New York City in 1911 and spent her childhood in Roxbury, Connecticut. The granddaughter of John Bates Clark, classic American economist and teacher of Veblen, and the sister of the novelist Eleanor Clark, she graduated from Vassar College in 1933 where she edited the *Vassar Miscellany News*. In 1936 she was a member of the editorial staff of *Fortune*. Her poems appeared in *Poetry*, *Common Sense*, the *Nation* and the *New Republic*.



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**SARAH N. CLEGHORN** was born in 1876 at Norfolk, Virginia. She lives near Manchester, Vermont. She spent a year at Radcliffe, has taught at Manumit School and Vassar College, and her poems have appeared during the last thirty years everywhere from the old *Masses* and the *American* to the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Century*. Robert Frost, in his introduction to her autobiography, *Threescore*, contends that there is more "high explosive for righteousness" in a single line of Sarah Cleghorn's famous poem about the golf links than in the prose that labors under "several atmospheres of revolution." It originally appeared in 1915 in Franklin P. Adams' column in the *Tribune*.

**MALCOLM COWLEY** was born in the mining country of Pennsylvania in 1898. After his years at Harvard he went abroad with the earlier "exiles," edited *Secession*, contributed to *Broom* and *transition*. Better known as a critic and as literary editor of the *New Republic*, Cowley's poems (*Blue Juniata*, 1929, *The Dry Season*, 1941) record the moods and attitudes of the Lost Generation far more profoundly than the autobiographical *Exile's Return*.

**HART CRANE** was born in Ohio in 1899. His integrity as an artist contrasted always with—was perhaps the function of—his inability to reconcile himself with his family and with society. His poetry, from the "imagism" of "Sunday Morning Apples" to the only partially successful myth-making of *The Bridge*, is difficult in proportion to its prodigious ambition and to its author's failure to find any resolution for his personal conflicts. But the grandeur of lines like

For joy rides in stupendous coverings

has not been rivalled in our time. Crane leapt into the Atlantic from the stern of the S.S. *Orizaba* in 1932. He was returning from the terrible sojourn in Mexico he describes so poignantly in "Purgatorio." His poetry, as well as his life, are analyzed in that paragon of what a poet's biography should be, *Hart Crane* by Philip Horton.



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HUBERT CREEKMORE's third collection of poems is to be called *The Long Reprieve* and records the experiences of his third year in the U. S. Navy, as an officer stationed in the French island of New Caledonia. Cacophony, reverse rhyme, anti-climax and broken rhythms are used with striking effect to portray the anarchy of war and the cynicism of its backwash. Creekmore, who is now working for New Directions and completing a novel, was born in Mississippi in 1907, attended the University of Mississippi and took his Master's degree at Columbia with an essay on Ezra Pound. His earlier poems were collected in *Personal Sun* (1940) and *The Stone Ants* (1943).

E. E. CUMMINGS, born in 1894, educated but not tamed at Harvard, first achieved celebrity among the discriminating with his powerful war novel, *The Enormous Room*. After years abroad, Cummings returned to live in New York and Vermont. His poetry, recently collected in a single volume, is well described by Louis Untermeyer as "a jumble of imaginative exuberance, cool precision and archaic affectations. His is a mind which is in quick succession, lyrical, fantastic, grotesque, pathetic, savage." It should be said in addition that Cummings is a first-rate humorist, and despite his unabating eccentricity, one of the most original lyrical talents at work today. His description of Soviet Russia, *Eimi*, 1933, was a shock to those who hoped his literary iconoclasm would feel at home in Moscow. His *Collected Poems* were published in 1938. *50 Poems* and *1 X 1* appeared in 1940 and 1944.

WALTER DE LA MARE, born in 1873 in Kent, England, must spend a good part of his life in dread of the next anthologist who will neglect a hundred almost equally worthy poems to reprint "The Listeners." What irony, that the poem the Romantics and masters of neo-Gothic mystery never quite wrote, should have been finally achieved by a man who spent eighteen years of his life working for the Standard Oil Company! Equally renowned for his children's books (*Peacock Pie*, etc.) and the novel *Memoirs of a Midget*, De La Mare's poetry is notable for the subtlety



with which its archaic diction and floating rhythms convey a spectral beauty.

REUEL DENNEY was born in New York City in 1913, attended Dartmouth, taught school in Buffalo, farmed in Vermont and is now one of the editors of *Fortune*. Although he has written several experimental plays ("The Calculators," "The Headless Horseman") his only published work so far has been *The Connecticut River*, a group of poems in an earthy and delightfully personal style which was published in 1939.

BABETTE DEUTSCH'S latest collection of poems, *Take Them, Stranger* went beyond the quality that stamped most strikingly her earlier work—poignant reflection of the world's wrong; there was a control and a quiet assurance that was new. With her husband, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Miss Deutsch had already made a major contribution through her translations to the appreciation of Russian poetry; and in her critical work (*This Modern Poetry*, 1935) to the appreciation of poetry generally. Born in New York City, she graduated from Barnard College and was for a while secretary to the late Thorstein Veblen.

LAWRENCE DURRELL's poetic descent is from Auden and Dylan Thomas. In his first book of poems, *A Private Country* (1943), the Audenesque is most pronounced in the Byronic "Ballad of the Good Lord Nelson":

'England Expects' was the motto he gave  
When he thought of little Emma out on Biscay's wave,  
And remembered working on her like a galley-slave . . .  
If they'd treat their women in the Nelson way  
There'd be fewer frigid husbands every day  
And many more heroes on the Bay of Biscay  
Aboard the Victory, Victory O.'



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Thomas's influence is apparent in the remarkable sequence "The Sonnet of Hamlet" and in the poem in this collection, but Durrell's individuality emerges both in the sureness of his technique and in the Eastern Mediterranean setting which he has made his own, following extended duty in the British government service abroad.

RICHARD EBERHART was born in Austin, Minnesota, in 1904, a fact which will be less obvious to the reader of his poetry than that he was educated at Cambridge and published by Oxford, taught English at St. Mark's School, tutored the son of the King of Siam and compounded an elegant poetic idiom from close study of the styles of Donne, Blake and Hopkins. Nevertheless it is important. For the *energy* ("Spirit won't keep/ But like the laughter in the throat/It shocks out over the teeth/In a stony springing brook") and the *images* ("Opportunity, tired cup of tin") are as American as Mauldin and Mark Twain. The famous and over-anthologized "Groundhog," for all its closing invocation of China, Greece, Alexander, Montaigne and Saint Theresa, is strictly a confession of the New England conscience, closer in spirit to Emerson and Dickinson than to the English metaphysicals. The matchless lyrics, "If I could only live . . ." and "I walked out to the graveyard . . ." actually derive their strength from the "moral answer" which they seem to spurn. The unique war poems like "Dam Neck, Virginia" and "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment" are less unique for the atmosphere of mysticism in which they seem to float than for the mechanical curiosity and administrative competence which they fail to conceal. This dualism of Eberhart the exquisite and Eberhart the executive accounts both for the great unevenness of *Reading the Spirit* and *Song and Idea* and for exciting fireworks when in the best poems the two Eberharts stubbornly join hands.

T. S. ELIOT was born in 1888 in St. Louis and educated at Harvard and Oxford. The radical symbolist experimenter of "Prufrock," "Gerontion" and *The Waste Land*, after living in England two decades described himself as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, Anglo-Catholic in religion."



But if Eliot has become thrice subdued in keeping with the pedantic perfection of his later verse and the schoolmasterly dogmatism of his essays, his championship of younger talent in *The Criterion*, the power of his popular verse-dramas, *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Family Reunion*, are answer enough to those who have prematurely written his obituary. Prophet of frustration, later of sophisticated piety, the artist remains master throughout. The philosophies, even the ornate style studded with literary allusion and quotation, may date quickly. The word-magic of poems like "The Hollow Men" and "Ash Wednesday" is deathless. Eliot's 'war poem,' *Four Quartets*, appeared in 1943.

WILLIAM EMPSON's first book, *Seren Types of Ambiguity*, was published shortly after he left Cambridge in 1929. His early *Poems* appeared in 1935 and the later *The Gathering Storm* in 1940 after teaching and travelling in the Orient and in the United States. "Many people," he writes in a note to the later collection, "like myself prefer to read poetry mixed with prose; it gives you more to go by; the conventions of poetry have been getting far off from normal life, so that to have a prose bridge makes reading poetry seem more natural. . . . The fashion for obscure poetry, as a recent development, came in at about the same time as the fashion for crossword puzzles; and it seems to me that this revival of puzzle interest in poetry, an old and natural thing, has got a bad name merely by failing to know itself and refusing to publish the answer."

PAUL ENGLE was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1910; studied at the University of Iowa, Columbia and Oxford. His first book, *American Song*, was highly praised; his second and third, *Break the Heart's Anger* and *Corn*, roundly thumped. So far, Engle has been the slave of his own exuberance. He has attempted the difficult task of carrying the Whitman-Sandburg tradition into a generation socially rebellious but nurtured on symbolism.

KENNETH FEARING, born in Chicago in 1902, worked as a millhand and journalist until the publication of his first book of poems, *Angel Arms*,



in 1929. Already original for his kaleidoscopic realism, the development of *Poems*, 1935, may be appreciated by comparing the introductory poem of Part IV in this anthology with the later "Dirge." Whether the virtuosity of Fearing's bludgeoning manner would mature to a broader idiom was one of the important questions of "post-depression" poetry. It was not answered by the appearance of *Collected Poems* in 1940.

ROBERT FITZGERALD'S poetry is distinguished by two qualities, its elegance and its capacity to evoke the past. In his early *Poems* (1935) imagism and the early Eliot intrude, but in *A Wreath for the Sea* (1943) moment and mood are fixed with sheer magic, figures recreated out of the past with a poignancy that is breathtaking. Fitzgerald was born in Geneva, New York, in 1910. He studied classical languages at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1931-2, and attended Harvard the following year. From 1933 to 1935 he worked on the city staff of the *New York Herald-Tribune* and from 1936 to 1942 (intermittently) on *Time*. From 1943 to 1945 he served with the Navy in the Pacific. His translations of Euripides' *Alcestis* and of Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus* (the first two in collaboration with Dudley Fitts) are unrivalled.

ROBERT FROST, the poet *par excellence* of New England and already a classic in his own country, continues to create with unflagging distinction though his philosophy and style seem static. He was born in San Francisco in 1875 and was, off and on, a shoemaker, textile worker, student (Dartmouth and Harvard), teacher, editor, farmer—and unappreciated poet. His fame, when it came, was great, and has remained so. It began in England, where he lived from 1912 to 1915. Frost's poetry is precise, sly, meditative, sympathetic; always bucolic and generally didactic in a transcendental but conversational sort of way. He has described himself as one of two kinds of realist: not the kind "who offers a good deal of dirt with his potato to show that it is a real one," but rather "the one who is satisfied with the potato brushed clean."



ROY FULLER's poetry, like that of his contemporaries Alun Lewis, Terrence Tiller, John Heath-Stubbs and Sidney Keyes, is exciting for its embodiment of a sense of great change in the world. In Fuller that sense is expressed with such overwhelming honesty that the writing tends often to be devoid of ornament, knotted with the concentration of thought, oblivious to metrical experiment or contemporary "new directions." Conversely, this self-contained dedication is the writing's strength. Published in 1942 when the poet was thirty and had just been transferred from the British Navy to the Fleet Air Arm, *The Middle of a War* expressed an agony of spirit that had not been heard in English poetry since Owen and which constituted the first real literary expression of World War II. If Fuller never achieved in his next book *A Lost Season* quite the intensity of such poems as "Spring: 1942" and "Troopship," he did in poems like "The Giraffes" and "In Africa" broaden his focus by suggesting a mystery from which civilization might expect rejuvenation.

JEAN GARRIGUE, whose *Thirty-Six Poems and a Few Songs* appeared in New Directions' *Five Young American Poets 1944*, was there described as a contemplative lyricist, but she might also be called a metaphysical imagist. Without resembling any of them her much more flowing style sometimes recalls in its precise "memoranda" Marianne Moore, in its temporal fixity Turner, a less violent Eberhart, a more color-conscious Marguerite Young. She herself describes poetry as an art of "many-jointed" relationship, something that "illuminates in a cold, perpetual heat. The forestation of symbol around all of the events that have the integrity which obliges the poet to use them . . ." Born in Indiana and a graduate of the University of Chicago, Jean Garrigue now lives in New York City.

ROBERT GRAVES was born in 1895 and during World War I served in France in the same regiment as Siegfried Sassoon, achieving fame first as a war poet, as the biographer of T. E. Lawrence and as the author of *Good-bye to All That*, and then twenty years later still greater fame as the histori-



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cal novelist of *I, Claudius* and *Hercules*, *My Shipmate* and the pitiless biographer of John Milton. How good the poet was who had been writing quietly all this time was revealed to American readers with the publication of *Collected Poems* in 1938. The rather humorless and priggish Foreword to this book, beyond acknowledging a debt to his wife the poet Laura Riding, throws one spark of light on Graves' unquestionable vitality as a poet. "To manifest poetic faith," he says, "by a close and energetic study of the disgusting, the contemptible and the evil is not very far in the direction of poetic serenity, but it has been the behaviour most natural to a man of my physical and literary inheritances."

**HORACE GREGORY** was born in Wisconsin in 1898, attended the University there, and lives in New York. A man of letters in the full creative sense—urban, Irish, full of a restless, generous energy—his poetry found stiff competition in the occupations of criticism and teaching, and in the championship of younger talent. His lyrical gift, tempered by a strong sense of social injustice and disorder, reached maturity in *No Retreat*, 1933. But his elliptical philosophic verse (*Chorus for Surrival*, 1935), his translations from Catullus, his critique of D. H. Lawrence's symbolism (*Pilgrim of the Apocalypse*) are equally vigorous. His wife, Marya Zaturenska, is a lyric poet celebrated in her own right. (Randolph Bourne, whose courageous career is celebrated in Gregory's second poem of this collection, was the crippled editor of the *New Republic* who fought a single-handed intellectual battle against America's entrance into the First World War.)

**RALPH GUSTAFSON**, a graduate of Bishop's University and Oxford, and at present with the British Information Service in New York, was born in Quebec province, Canada, in 1909. The most original if not the most considerable poet to come out of Canada, he has edited three discriminating anthologies of Canadian writing. His verse play, *Alfred The Great*, was published in London in 1937, and his collected lyrics appeared in New York in 1944 under the title *Flight into Darkness*. Gustafson is a



religious poet in the sense that his poetry reasserts the dignity of man as a reflection of man's idea of God; in his best poems ecstasy provides its own meaning, but frequently the effect of a private language is conveyed and the destination is lost in a labyrinth of short-cuts.

THOMAS HARDY was born near Dorchester, England, in 1840. He died in 1928. Renowned as a novelist, the author of *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, his first and last love was poetry, and to poetry went the essence of his homely genius. His verse has been criticized as harsh, its philosophy as fatalistic. It is the harshness of a giant's uncompromising strength, the fatalism of one who loved humanity too well to tell it pretty fables.

ALFRED HAYES was born in London, England, in 1911, but has lived in New York City 31 of his 36 years. He has worked as a reporter on a tabloid, for the WPA Federal Theatre's "Living Newspapers," and has contributed verse to the *New Masses*, *Trial Balances*, and the *New Republic*. In 1943 he entered the Army. The influence of Browning, and possibly Masters, may be felt in the powerful "Death of the Craneman," but these were healthy influences in 1934 and Hayes made the resultant style his own.

RUTH HERSCHBERGER studied at the University of Chicago and at Black Mountain College and is now living in New York City. Like her friends and equally talented contemporaries, Jean Garrigue and Marguerite Young, Miss Herschberger came from the Middle West (she was born in Chicago in 1917, the daughter of a celebrated football player) and like them she received her first encouragement from Ransom's *Kenyon Review*, but her poetry is less metaphysical, less mannered and more sensuous. Her work has appeared also in *Accent*, *Common Sense*, *Partisan Review* and *Portfolio*.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS may be fated, through the sheer intensity of his vision, to remain a poet's poet, though it is difficult to see



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how such a translucent poem as "Pied Beauty" will escape the anthologies of the future. He was born in 1844, spent most of his life as a Jesuit priest and teacher of Greek metrics. He died in 1889. His poems, first published by Bridges in 1918, only achieved influence with the second edition of 1930. If Hopkins' style still appears difficult it is because, as one of his editors has said, his is "a passionate emotion which seems to try to utter all its words in one," and an equally passionate intellect "striving at once to recognize and explain both the singleness and division of the accepted universe. . . . Others have sung *about* their intellectual exaltations; in none has the intellect itself been more the song." In addition to Hopkins' collected poems, the reader should not miss his superb letters, and the recently published *Note-Books and Papers* with reproductions of his exquisite Leonardo-like pen drawings.

A. E. HOUSMAN has compared poetry to a secretion—"whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir, or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster." It is to the latter that one must turn for explanation of the pessimistic spell of *The Shropshire Lad*. Housman was born in 1859, and with the exception of the echo of *Last Poems* 30 years later, this slender sheaf was his only contribution to poetry in the 78 years of his life. It was a great contribution, and immediately popular, but the scholarly editor of Manilius' forgotten works made a fetish of his shattered inspiration, preferring to comment acidly in Latin upon the foibles of another day than to trust himself again to the buffetings of an uncloistered world. It was the world's misfortune, perhaps, that this perfectionist in a minor key who had succeeded in stripping poetry to the bone merely in linking the moods of adolescent melancholy and good cheer, should have been assured immortality before he was 40.

RANDALL JARRELL's criticism is on the prowl for ultimate complexities and his poetry is packed hard with them. If in his reviews, he sometimes slaps a poet down too readily for leaning on the past or using a well-worn rhyme, so in his poetry the idea seems always to dictate the



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form—and the rhythm, in extremities, to be sacrificed to the odd word or the violent image. This was more true of Jarrell's first book, *Blood for a Stranger* (1942), written angrily out of the guilt and frustration of life as a University of Texas teacher, than of his second, *Little Friend, Little Friend* (1945) in which, as a sergeant training B-29 crews, the poet is confronted with the greater anonymity and suffering of war and manages to give his verse a more human referent and a freer pace.

ROBINSON JEFFERS was born in Pittsburgh in 1887. He spent some of his youth abroad, but has lived most of his life in the tower he built for himself on the cliff above Carmel, California. He has been aptly described by William Harlan Hale as a latter-day Whitman, looking outward from the Pacific coast, rather than inward from the Atlantic, toward death rather than toward life. The sweep of Whitman is in his majestic verse, but the love has turned to hate, at best to pity and disgust. "Roan Stallion" was one of the first, and remains the best of that succession of long poems in which Jeffers celebrated the introversion of the race, usually through the symbol of incestuous, self-destructive love. His *Selected Poetry* was published in 1937.

JOSEPHINE W. JOHNSON, author of the Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Now in November* and several other novels, was born in 1910 in Missouri and attended Washington University where she studied painting. She lives on a farm in St. Louis County and has been active in union organizing work. Her poetry, while conventional in style, is remarkable for its emotional honesty and the sinew with which it handles social issues.

JAMES JOYCE, like another major novelist, the author of *Wuthering Heights*, is a minor poet but a fine one. He was born in Dublin in 1882 and lived in Zurich and Trieste and Paris in the years between the Wars. With the publication of *Ulysses* by Sylvia Beach in 1922, worshippers and imitators, charlatans and censors, perched on his doorstep and he became a legend. The great novelist died in 1941 in France, two years after the



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publication of his last work, *Finnegans Wake*. In Joyce's poetry, the lyricism of his prose is attenuated to a flute-like key, not often stirring and tragic as in "I hear An Army," but full of sentiment, subdued and like the title of his first book, *Chamber Music*.

SIDNEY KEYES, born at Dartford, Kent, in 1922, and killed in Tunisia twenty years later, lived a life as dedicated to art and as full of dramatic spiritual developments as though he had foreseen its exact duration. At 5 he was poring over legend and history, and rejecting *The Children's Encyclopaedia* as inaccurate. At 16 he was writing poems of a reserved duality but already in his own precisely quiet style. At 17 he was visiting France and beginning to see in the natural world that had always pre-occupied him a meaningful symbolism. At 18 he entered Oxford, shared his creative life with the gifted poet John Heath-Stubbs. At 19 he entered the Army and in the words of his friend and the editor of his *Collected Poems*, Michael Meyer, "came into immediate contact with the material world. Love and Death, inextricably entwined, became vital problems instead of subjects for laboratory analysis. . . . He lost his duality. He found his imaginary fears shared by thousands, and became the spokesman of a generation." In his own words Keyes conceived the function of poetry to be "to express the eternal meaning which resides in the physical world, and show the relationship between the eternal and its physical counterpart."

D. H. LAWRENCE was born in 1885 in the mining country of England and died in Nice, France, in 1930 after a tortured life spent wandering through Europe and Australia, Arizona and Mexico. What he sought—the 'noble savage,' masculine civilization, sex unperverted by guilt of mind or war of wills—he never found. His works, marred by a self-conscious sense of liberation and the zeal to convert or castigate, but burning with the intensity of his quest, are the result. The poems suffer more than the novels from the hysteria of the propagandist who will stop for no formal discipline; but poet and novelist are equal parts of the man, and at their best equally great. "The Ship of Death," found in a number of versions in his papers after his death, was Lawrence's last poem.



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**LAURIE LEE** is a young English poet whose first book, *The Sun My Monument*, appeared in 1944.

**ALUN LEWIS** was born in 1915. He was teaching school in one of the mining valleys of his native Wales when the war began. His first book, *Raider's Dawn*, reflected this background and his reactions to a year of soldiering in England. *The Last Inspection* complemented these observations in prose. His last book, *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets*, from which the poems in this anthology are chosen, was published posthumously after the poet's death at Arakan, Burma, in 1944. "For myself," wrote Lewis modestly to Robert Graves in one of his last letters, "I can't claim as much hold on the universal as some poets and consider my poems as expressions of personal experience." But he added: "When I wrote a poem about the jungle I found it had become a criticism of the Western world . . . I wanted to fuse the finite and the infinite in action." And in another letter (to his wife): "They (the poems) are universal statements if they're anything." His last poems, with their unforgettable fusion of place and time, are more than that; they express triumphantly what Lewis thought they had failed to express: "At once the passion of Love, the coldness of Death . . . and the fire that beats against resignation."

**C. DAY LEWIS** was born in Ireland in 1904 and educated at Oxford with Auden, Spender, Rex Warner and others of that younger group for whom he was to become a John the Baptist. His verse is more studied and programmatic than theirs, but his versatility (he is the author of several novels and is a first-rate critic) have won him equal respect.

**VACHEL LINDSAY** was born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1879. One of the most characteristic yet individual of American poets, he tramped the country, "bringing beauty to the people," inventing a popular music for its raucous blend of megalomania and idealism, selling his poems for bread, chanting from platforms like any other revivalist, exhausting himself and his art in one grand, generous splurge of emotion. There is Lindsay



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the prophet; there is Lindsay the crank; Lindsay the weaver of delicate phantasies for children; Lindsay the indignant Socialist. He may not have realized his goal of a "communal art," but he came closer to celebrating his country in terms that its people could appreciate than any other contemporary. He died in 1931.

PARE LORENTZ, born in West Virginia in 1905, attended West Virginia Wesleyan and served for a time as motion picture critic on such magazines as *Judge*, *Vanity Fair* and *McCalls*. He wrote and directed two great documentary films, *The Plow That Broke The Plains* and *The River*. It was the second of these, produced by the Farm Security Administration, that was hailed as a new literary form when the book, combining soundtrack and pictures, appeared. Archibald MacLeish (in *Land of the Free*) and Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White (*You Have Seen Their Faces*) had anticipated this development; but Lorentz's open-space cadences were a sturdy contribution to the Whitman tradition.

AMY LOWELL, of the Boston Lowells, but who smoked cigars and shocked her contemporaries even more with her free verse, was born in 1874 in Brookline, Mass. Renowned for her promotion of the Imagist movement, she was an able craftswoman and a healthy influence in the 1912-20 renaissance, but her poetry, with little but its glittering finish to recommend it, seems dated today. Her two-volume life of Keats is still the standard biography. She died in 1925.

ROBERT LOWELL, whose first book, *Land of Unlikeness* (1944), left no doubt of his stature as a poet, had already been publicly marked as a Catholic, a conscientious objector and a violator of family tradition. Son of a retired naval commander, great-grandson of a martial poet and anti-papist, and heir to a Boston family tradition that boasted members in every war since the Revolution, he tried to enlist twice, then became convinced that total war with its thought-control and pattern-bombings was unprincipled and anti-Christian. In October, 1943, Lowell was sentenced



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to a year and day in Federal prison. Since his release he has been living with his wife Jean Stafford, the novelist, first at Westport, Connecticut, more recently at Damariscotta Mills, Maine, and working on a second book, *Lord Weary's Castle*, which will include the sonnet sequence in this anthology. Lowell's early writing was encouraged by Eberhart at St. Mark's School, and by John Crowe Ransom at Kenyon College, but owes little to either. The weight of the imagery and the familiarity with which God is invoked recall Crashaw, Vaughan and Donne, but the landscape is New England and the outrageous skill with which all centuries are forced to march through the present is Lowell's alone.

**HUGH MACDIARMID** is the pen-name of Christopher M. Grieve, a Scotsman born in 1892 and educated at Edinburgh University. As a student he joined the Fabian Society. Through World War I he served in the Medical Corps, refusing to accept rank. As a Socialist, after the war, he helped to found the National Party of Scotland, from which he was subsequently expelled as a Communist. In 1936 he was expelled from the Communist Party for demanding Scottish autonomy, but was reinstated the same year. His "recreation" was once given in the English *Who's Who* as "Anglo-phobia" and he then lived in one of the northernmost of the Shetland Islands. Much of MacDiarmid's poetry is in the Scots vernacular, and he has been compared to Robert Burns for the national-proletarian bite of his scurrilous lyrics. He is at his worst when he gets literary about "the eternal lightning of Lenin's bones"; at his best when he writes straight, letting the indignation generate the poetry.

**ARCHIBALD MACLEISH** was born in 1892. He graduated from Yale, where he excelled as scholar and athlete, and began the practice of law in Boston after attending the Harvard Law School. He had already seen war service in France and published one book of verse. Abandoning law, MacLeish travelled in France and Persia during the 20's, finally joining the editorial staff of *Fortune* where he was considered their ablest chronicler of the nation's industrial and political affairs. During World War II



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States in 1946, have the brashness as well as the freshness of a new continent about them: the lyrics have much of the lilt and vigor of Burns; the satires are crude, belligerent and naively Marxist.

EDWIN MARKHAM was born in Oregon in 1852 and lived until his recent death in Staten Island, New York. No poem ever published in America has had the instant and lasting popularity of "The Man with the Hoe" which appeared in 1899. Conventional in form, inspired by the still more conventional Millet painting, its indignation and rugged strength are still challenging.

JOHN MASEFIELD, the present Poet Laureate of England, was born in 1878 and won an early fame with *Salt-Water Ballads* and the narratives, *Dauber* and *The Widow in the Bye Street*. The rude sincerity of his early work and the quotable lilt of such "anthology pieces" as "Cargoes" and "Sea Fever" are still prized above the magnificent narrative sweep and technical virtuosity of *Reynard the Fox*.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS was born in Kansas in 1869. As a realistic, psychological "novelist," if not as a poet, he takes his place beside Dreiser, Anderson and Dos Passos. For *Spoon River Anthology*, contributing little to the musical and architectural in poetry, remains a masterpiece of collective characterization. Neither ingratiating nor epigrammatic, Masters' weapon is blunt, effective.

WILLIAM MEREDITH was born in New York City in 1919 and graduated from Princeton in 1940, serving the following year as a reporter on the *New York Times* until his induction into the Army. From 1941 to 1942 he did public relations work as an enlisted man in the Air Corps. In 1942 he was transferred to the Navy, won his wings and served as a naval aviator in the Aleutian Campaign (1942-1943) and in the Central Pacific (1944-1945). He is presently stationed at the Army and Navy Staff College in Washington, D. C. Meredith's *Love Letter from an Impossible Land* was



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MacLeish denounced *The Irresponsibles*, headed the Office of Facts and Figures and the Library of Congress, served briefly as Assistant Secretary of State. From *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish* to the lyrics of *New Found Land* and the nostalgic *Conquistador* in narrative terza-rima, through the social satire of *Frescoes* and the trail-blazing radio play, *The Fall of the City*, MacLeish had developed as a poet. After *Air Raid* (1940) he wrote few poems, and those few of an "official" character.

ARCHIBALD FLEMING MACLIESH was born in 1911. At Princeton in 1931 he collaborated on the undergraduate prize play. After the publication of *The Island Called Pharos* in 1934, MacLiesh lived in New City, N. Y. and devoted his talents to the writing of drama in verse. *The Destroyers* was published in 1940; *Cone of Silence*, a novel, in 1942. The long poem "Exploration by Air" was featured in *The Poetry of Flight* by the present editor. It recorded MacLiesh's first (and unsurpassed) observations of the meaning of flight, an experience that was subsequently broadened by a year training fighter pilots at Shaw Field and two years ferrying planes for the Air Transport Command.

LOUIS MACNEICE was born in Ireland in 1907 and attended Oxford. A close friend of Auden, and the Oxford poets generally, he went his own way from the beginning, eschewing politics and beating out a somewhat crabbed but powerful style of his own. Satire is the prevailing weather in his landscapes. Spare solidity characterizes his authentic translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Following the war, in which MacNeice served as a fire-watcher and writer for the BBC his war poems were published in *Springboard*.

JOHN MANIFOLD was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1915 and educated at Cambridge. Escaping from Germany, where he was working as translator for a publishing firm in 1939, he joined the British Army, became a Captain in the Intelligence Corps, and served in West Africa, France, and Germany. His poems, which are to be published in the United



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published in 1944 with a preface by Archibald MacLeish who remarked that "because the experience of this war, fought with new weapons in remote and unimaginable places, is an experience strange to most of us . . . the communication itself is oblique—seen from the corner of the eye like the movement of danger at night."

THOMAS MERTON, a Cistercian monk of the Strict Observance who became a Trappist at Our Lady of Gethsemani, Kentucky, in 1941, has this to say about religious poetry: "It won't get better until Christians are more serious about the ascetic element essential to their faith. Asceticism is necessary to smelt down the truths of dogma into concrete religious experience, because without it there can be no love of God. However, many Catholics who truly love God and might otherwise have something to say about it, are paralyzed by the lack of a corresponding literary asceticism: *i.e.* they passively accept the cheapest and most trashy literary standards that a materialistic culture has to offer." Merton was born at Prades, France, in 1915. His father was an artist who had come to France from New Zealand. The poet was educated at the Lycee of Montauban and at Clare College, Cambridge, taking his M.A. at Columbia and teaching thereafter for several years at the Franciscan college of St. Bonaventure in upstate New York. His *Thirty Poems* was published by New Directions in 1944.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY was born in Maine in 1892 and had written the famous "Renascence" before she attended Vassar College in 1913. Her intense feminism and hunger for beauty struck a responsive chord and she became the idol of more than one generation of rebellious young women. To modern poetry she brought a new freedom of mood and movement and an attractive bitter-sweetness. Critics who looked for major poetry to follow the flowering of Miss Millay's talent were disappointed by the somewhat archaic rhetoric of *Fatal Interview* and the studied slow-motion of *Conversation at Midnight*. During the War, Miss Millay succumbed to the temptation to be topical, producing in *The Ballad of Lidice* a poem that honored neither its author nor the subject.



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MARLANNE MOORE was editor of that focus of revolutionary writing, *The Dial*, from 1925 to 1929. She was born in 1887 and now lives in Brooklyn. Her impressive *Selected Poems* was published in 1935 with a preface by T. S. Eliot who said: "Miss Moore is one of those few who have done the language some service in my lifetime . . . carrying on that struggle for the maintenance of a living speech, for the maintenance of its strength, its subtlety, for the preservation of quality of feeling, which must be kept up in every generation." "In Distrust of Merits," a poem of civilian guilt and humility, which appeared in *Nevertheless* (1944) was hailed by W. H. Auden as the outstanding war poem of World War II.

OGDEN NASH was born in 1902 and has worked in various advertising and editorial capacities, including a term on the staff of the *New Yorker*, where most of the horrific rhymes of *Hard Lines* and subsequent volumes first appeared. Lines like "The Bronx?/No, thonx!" may not be immortal, but they will live until the things they hold up to ridicule become something new and less strange.

WILFRED OWEN was killed at the age of 25 in the battle for the Sambre Canal, November 4, 1918. He was, to quote the words of his friend, editor and fellow Englishman, Edmund Blunden, "one of those destined beings who, without pride of self, 'see, as from a tower, the end of all.' Outwardly he was quiet, unobtrusive, full of good sense; inwardly he could not help regarding the world with the dignity of a seer." A woman who knew him as a young officer, already tending toward a profound pacifism, describes his sensitive, acutely sympathetic nature: "Direct personal experience and individual development can hardly be said to have existed for him. He could only suffer, or rejoice, vicariously." Like Keats, he knew that he would be among the English poets after his death, but he never lived to see his single small volume in print. "He was a man of absolute integrity of mind," wrote Siegfried Sassoon, another poet-friend. "He never wrote his poems (as so many war poets did) to make the effect of a personal gesture."



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DOROTHY PARKER, who was born in New Jersey in 1893, is even more famous as a wit than as the author of the most acidulous *vers de société* of her time. She claims to have learnt nothing at school "except that if you spit on a pencil eraser, it will erase ink." Superstitious, pessimistic, gregarious and something of a radical, she writes movie scenarios and short stories, as well as the verse collected in *Not So Deep as a Well*.

KENNETH PATCHEN was born in 1911 in Ohio of a miner's family and worked in the steel mills before attending the Experimental College of the University of Wisconsin. He settled in New York about the time his first book of poems, *Before the Brave*, was published in 1936. From 1939 to 1945 the variety and volume of his work has been astounding, *First Will and Testament* and *Cloth of the Tempest* containing his richest poetry, *The Journal of Albion Moonlight* and *Memoirs of a Shy Pornographer* his most ambitious fantasies in prose. Patchen never tires of baiting the bourgeois, the professor, the war monger, the businessman, the politician and the pundit. He does not stop to explain any of these phenomena; he is too busy denouncing them. Nor does he stop to integrate or perfect his own formal arrangements. Yet Patchen has undeniable gifts. Unlike other poets he never caters to the popular style. War has not softened his pacifism, nor anti-Stalinism his revolutionary ardor, nor recognition his delight in experiment—the deliberate derangement of words and ideas. The *Memoirs* reveals, moreover, an American humorist more daring than Perelman and as original as Thurber. If one wishes occasionally that Patchen would grow up and take his tongue out of his cheek, one is more frequently delighted that in his world magic and mystification persist.

RUTH PITTER was born in Essex in 1897. To make a living during World War I she studied woodwork and painting and now operates a hand-painted-gift business in Chelsea. Scorning the dependency of the Bohemian, she prides herself on being "frugal, industrious and provident."



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Of her poetry (she began writing it at the age of 5) she says: "It occurs in the form of a mood out of which phrases gradually crystallize and a rhythm emerges. . . . You can make poetry out of yourself; prose takes experience and drudgery." Miss Pitter's poetry certainly is the kind that is spun out of the self, but the craftsmanship is of a high order. The poem in this collection is taken from *The Spirit Watches* (1939).

**EZRA POUND**, the *enfant terrible* of modern poetry, was born in Idaho in 1885 and lived abroad (in London, Paris and Rapallo, Italy) from 1908 to 1945. Instigator of movements—Imagism, Vorticism, Objectivism, Social Credit—the classic and oriental erudition, the conversational formalism of his art have exerted an acknowledged and profound influence on such widely different talents as Eliot, MacLeish, Hemingway, Ford Madox Ford, Joyce and Yeats. His early lyrics are fresh, but always faintly literary. His interminable *Cantos* are a badly assimilated pot-pourri of history, economics, science, and especially literature. At their best they rise to symphonic impressionism. In 1945, Pound, who had been broadcasting throughout World War II for Mussolini's Italy, was seized and brought to trial for treason by the invading Allied forces.

**FREDERIC PROKOSCH** was born in Wisconsin in 1909. He was educated at Harvard, Yale and Cambridge. Making something of a reputation at home and abroad as a scholar and champion squash-racquets player, his novels (*The Asiatics*, *The Seven Who Fled*, *Night of the Poor*, *Age of Thunder*) have been notable for an almost sickly response to the beauty of things past. The same feeling, intensified, inspires his verse. Prokosch's *Chosen Poems* were published in 1944.

**JOHN CROWE RANSOM** was born in Tennessee in 1888 and studied at Vanderbilt and Oxford Universities. He taught at the former and edited several publications (notably *The Fugitive*) devoted to the cultivation of letters in the South. With *Chills and Fever*, 1924, he set the pace for the elegant intellectualism that has stamped most Southern poetry since.



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The matter of his poems is trivial; the philosophy, ironic; the style, superbly deft. Recently Ransom has edited the *Kenyon Review*. His *Selected Poems* were published in 1945.

KENNETH REXROTH, poet, abstract painter and mountaineer, was born in Indiana in 1905. His political evolution took him from the IWW (as a youngster) through Stalinism (League of American Writers) to Christian Anarchism (influenced by Kropotkin, Berkman, Vanzetti, Lawrence and especially Albert Schweitzer, and by the English personalist revolt against the modern war-making state). His evolution as a poet took him from neo-imagism (he edited the *Objectivists' Anthology* in Paris in 1932) to the intimate classicism of *The Phoenix and the Tortoise* (1944) from which the poems in the present anthology are selected. Rexroth, who now lives in San Francisco and is working on a series of verse plays, believes that "poetry is best when it is personal, speech from one to another; purposive, written out of some definable subjective need and objective motivation; 'simple, sensuous and passionate' or at least made up of such elements or articulated around them. I find hallucination and rhetoric dull, pernicious and silly. Cataclysms are all alike and it is not a human function to create them. Being human is being responsible, totally."

LOLA RIDGE's radical, "class-conscious" poetry antedates by a generation most of the work commonly described in those terms. She was born in Ireland, coming to New York in 1907 and publishing *The Ghetto and Other Poems* in 1918. Her later long poems, tenuous and mystical, intense and unpopular, tended to obscure the historical importance of her early inventions.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON was born in Maine in 1869. He spent several years at Harvard and from 1893 to 1910 worked at a succession of clerical jobs in New York City, one of which he secured through President Theodore Roosevelt who had read *Captain Craig*. With *The Man Against the Sky*, Robinson's reputation as the master philosophic



poet of his time was made. He began to present character, specifically the "little man" of the American lower middle class and farm, with a realism and economy new to American poetry. From then on, as Untermeyer remarks, "Frustration and defeat are like an organ-point heard below the varying music of his verse; failure is almost glorified." In later years, as Robinson turned out Tennysonian tragedies with a New England background to meet the cost of living-for-letters, his work became more bleakly moral, his blank verse more uncompromisingly spare. He died in 1935, a lonely man but praised and honored for his single-minded devotion to poetry.

SELDEN RODMAN was born in New York City in 1909 and graduated from Yale in 1931 where he founded and edited the polemical *Harkness Hoot* with William Harlan Hale. He is the author of *Mortal Triumph and Other Poems*; *Lawrence: The Last Crusade*; *The Airmen*; *The Poetry of Flight*; *The Revolutionists* and (with Richard Eberhart) *War and the Poet*. With Alfred M. Bingham he edited the political monthly *Common Sense* from 1932 to 1943. From 1943 to 1945 he served in the Army with the Office of Strategic Services.

MURIEL RUKEYSER's first book, *Theory of Flight*, was hailed in 1935 as "One of those rare first volumes which impress by their achievement more than by their promise." She was twenty-one at the time, born in New York, had attended Vassar and had already begun those travels to stormcenters of revolt from which the material for her best work has been invariably drawn. "Her poems," said Philip Blair Rice, "not only present and celebrate experience, but evaluate it." And, added Stephen Vincent Benét, "When Miss Rukeyser speaks her politics—and she speaks with sincerity and fire—she does so like a poet, not like a slightly worn phonograph record." *U. S. 1* (1938) was followed by *A Turning Wind* (1939). In 1942 Miss Rukeyser's remarkable study of the mathematician Willard Gibbs appeared. Her war poem, *Wake Island*, was a disappointment to her admirers.



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SAGITTARIUS is the pen-name of Olga Katzin, who was in a real sense (and comparable to the cartoonist Lowe) the conscience of England during the dark days before and after Munich. Her weekly barb appeared in *The New Statesman and Nation*, and continues to appear—‘alas,’ one is tempted to add—for the poet who was obliged to say in 1937:

Franco trusts to Britain  
Not to let him down . . .

had to take up the theme again in 1944 with the question:

Shall Greek Resistance be put down  
To prop the quislings of the Crown?

and in 1945, surveying post-war oratory:

Habituated to disguise,  
The spokesmen of united nations  
Their aims omit to advertise,  
And only tell their aspirations.

Whatever else 1945 failed to accomplish, it saw the publication for the first time in one volume, *Quiver's Choice*, of all Miss Katzin's lethal arrows. The satirist was born in London in 1896.

CARL SANDBURG was born in Illinois in 1878. He received his apprenticeship to the mantle of Walt Whitman in such varied occupations as reporter, scene-shifter, athlete, dish-washer, harvest hand, copy-writer, salesman, Socialist organizer, itinerant guitar-player and soldier in the Spanish-American War. Not until 1914, with the appearance of the famous “Chicago” in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, did he establish his reputation as a poet. Like Whitman, Sandburg employed the common speech of the people, including slang—but less self-consciously. Like Whitman



also, his work was fired with a democratic zeal and an identification with the traditions of a growing country, especially the folklore of its receding frontier. His most recent collection, *The People, Yes*, had all of the salt and more sense of form than his earlier work. He is the author of a monumental biography of Abraham Lincoln, and edited *The American Songbag*. He lived until recently at Hobart, Michigan.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON, wounded and invalided home in 1917 after three years in the trenches, threw his Military Cross in the Channel and announced publicly that he would serve no more. Hoping for a courts martial, he was declared "temporarily insane" and shipped to Palestine where he fought two years more. In 1920 he toured the United States, delivering anti-war talks and reading his poems. Sassoon's war poems of protest were surpassed in their time only by Owen's; his later poetry has been thin but never meretricious and sometimes intense; *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928) and *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) contain his finest prose. He was born in 1886.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ was born in 1914 in Brooklyn and was educated at New York University and Harvard. He taught for a number of years at the latter, and wrote while there his verse play *Shenandoah*. The earlier *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities* contains his best work. Precocious, versatile and productive, he had published verse, criticism, drama, short stories, written a novel, before this book of poems appeared in the autumn of 1938. In each of these media, Schwartz was predominantly concerned with "the values by which people live, as distinct from their beliefs and explicit avowals of choice."

KARL SHAPIRO was born in Baltimore in 1913 and his first book, *Poems*, was privately printed there in 1935. His first characteristic verse appeared in New Directions' *Five Young American Poets 1941*, in which he stated that poetry "has no sense of time, no idea of growth or progress, and no ambition . . . I write about myself, my house, my street, and my



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city, and not about 'America,' the word that is the chief enemy of modern poetry." *Person, Place and Thing* appeared the following year when its author had already reached Australia with an advance unit of the Medical Corps, and immediately established his reputation as the most accomplished technician in the post-Auden school and the spokesman of a new poetic generation. *The Place of Lore* (privately printed in Australia) and *V-Letter* (1944) bore witness to his technical resourcefulness and his increasing ability to probe the human situation without rhetorical tricks, but *Essay on Rime* (published after Shapiro's return to the United States in 1945) though arousing popular admiration for the extraordinary ease with which it analyzed the confusions of modern poetics was at the same time severely criticized for the glibness with which it disposed of all but the accepted masters, for a tone of anti-intellectualism carried over from certain poems in *V-Letter*, and for its failure to fill the vacuum it created. Shapiro is now living with his wife and child on a farm in Connecticut.

EDITH SITWELL was writing surrealist poetry long before André Breton invented the word or Pavel Tchelitchew painted her portrait. "The Bat," like the better-known "Sir Beelzebub" and "The King of China's Daughter" typifies that brittle style with which, as Louis Untermeyer remarked, the general reader associates her—"the artificer of a papier-maché universe, a juggler amusing herself in a world where grass is shrill, fire furry, where rains hang like wooden stalactites, where the creaking air, combed seas, and spangled emotions are equally automatic." The other Sitwell, the Sitwell of "Still Falls the Rain," achieved her maturity in *Street Song* (1942) and *Green Song and Other Poems* (1944), taking her place with the great mystical poets of an earlier religious generation. Edith Sitwell was born in 1887 of a titled family. Her two brothers, Osbert and Sacheverell, are distinguished men of letters in their own right. She lives in London.

STEPHEN SPENDER is one of the few poets whose first reviewers have not had cause to regret that they compared him to Shelley. Not



that he had yet achieved the philosophic breadth of that poet's maturity—but the intensity with which he called for comradeship and celebrated freedom struck a new high in the rich tradition of English lyricism. He was born in 1909, attended Oxford, was closely associated with the Auden-Day Lewis group and with left-wing politics, travelled widely on the Continent; served as a fire-warden during the London blitz of 1940–42. The fluid-image technique of the oft-quoted

Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,  
Drinker of horizon's fluid line . . .

has been criticized as symptomatic of the excess of ambiguity which is Spender's most obvious weakness. Sensitivity, verging on the feminine, a distrust of his own sentiment which too often leads to involved circumlocution—these tendencies cannot efface the singing strength of a dozen unsurpassed outpourings. Spender's latest work, of which "Spiritual Exercises" is characteristic, is more intellectual and embraces the influences of Hölderlin and Rilke (whose *Duino Elegies* Spender translated in 1939).

WALLACE STEVENS, who was born in Pennsylvania in 1879, and educated at Harvard, lives in Connecticut where he is presently vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. More than any other modern poet, he has constructed a complete dream world. But he insists, like Bishop Berkeley, that this world of ideas is the real one; and while the tools he uses have been fancy, barbaric color, irony, abstraction and archaism, it must be admitted that the mortar itself has been the incongruous data of contemporary urban life. *Harmonium*, *Ideas of Order* and *The Man with the Blue Guitar* are among his contributions to a difficult genre.

ALLEN TATE was born in Kentucky in 1899 and lives in Tennessee. His *Selected Poems* were recently published and he is the author of *Reactionary Essays* as well as biographies of Jefferson Davis and Stonewall



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Jackson. A Southern Agrarian in his politics, Tate's writing primly combines the "wit" of Pope and Donne with the uneasy modern conscience of the early T. S. Eliot. In 1945 Tate assumed the editorship of the *Sewanee Review*.

DYLAN THOMAS was born in Wales in 1914 and began to be recognized in the late thirties as the creator of a new poetic language that might supplant the dominant Auden-Spender-MacNeice canon. Thomas's vocabulary was non-political and lyrical, rich with new words and strong feelings, full of a mysticism of the body that suggested the work of such men as Matta and Tchelitchev in paint. Thomas defines poetry as "the rhythmic, inevitably narrative, movement from an over-clothed blindness to a naked vision," and poetic activity as "the physical and mental task of constructing a watertight compartment of words, preferably with a main moving column." Rejected for service in World War II, Thomas worked for the BBC. His poems and stories have been published in the United States by New Directions.

DUNSTAN THOMPSON's first book, *Poems* (1943), was rich with the scarcely assimilated influences of Conrad Aiken, George Barker and Dylan Thomas, but it had a richness of its own that made it memorable: its author showed surprising skill in the handling of the most difficult metrical patterns and he was not afraid to let an Elizabethan delight in words and a youthfully elegiac fascination with death carry him away. Thompson was born in Connecticut in 1918, was educated in England and France and at Harvard, published the experimental *Vice Versa* with Harry Brown, was serving overseas with the Army when his book came out.

WALTER JAMES TURNER was born in Australia in 1889 and lives in England, where he has been literary, musical and dramatic critic on such journals as the *London Mercury* and the *Daily Herald*. He has written novels, plays, satire and criticism. His poems, partly delightful fantasy, part an attempt to fix the poetry of science, are comparable, especially in their compact phrasing, to those of Wallace Stevens.



MARK VAN DOREN, the poet of a distinguished literary family, was born in Illinois in 1894, and divides his time between New York City, where he teaches and lectures, and Cornwall, Connecticut, where he has a farm. His work at St. John's College led to the provocative educational tract, *Liberal Education* (1943). For his *Collected Poems* (1939), Van Doren had won the Pulitzer Prize, and his *Anthology of World Poetry* (1929) and *The Oxford Book of American Prose* (1932) remain standard works. Van Doren's poems, drawing heavily on the American tradition and influenced by Robert Frost, are wonderfully skillful, observant, taut, and dry. Without innovation in matter or manner, they are never banal, often witty, and sometimes exciting. The two in this volume are from *Our Lady Peace and Other War Poems* (1942).

BARTOLOMEO VANZETTI was born in Italy in 1888. He landed at Ellis Island at the age of 20 and during the years until his arrest in 1919, he worked in stone-pits, brickyards, construction gangs and ice-works; finally as a carpenter and fish-peddler. A passionate student and thinker during this period (*The Divine Comedy* and Renan's *Jesus* were his favorite books) he turned from the Catholicism of his upbringing to theories of radical social change. It was as a philosophic anarchist and an active labor leader that he was framed on a murder charge with Nicola Sacco during the post-war Red-hysteria. He spent seven years in jail and was electrocuted August 22, 1927.

JOSÉ GARCIA VILLA, mystic and painter, is a naive poet whose first book, *Have Come, Am Here*, (1942) was poorly served by the sophisticated writers like Marianne Moore and Mark Van Doren who praised it uncritically. At their best the poems disclosed a childlike vision expressing itself through enchanting incantation. At their worst phrases like "To make icecream chrysantheme/Mix Christ and chrysanthemums," "God fears the poems of/Such as I!" and "O withouten her night-rose/I be forlornly aloss aloss" revealed a lamentable lack of intellectual discipline and taste. In a pretentious end-note Villa announced his discovery of



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“reversed consonance” (example, rhyming ‘light’ with ‘tall’), a device which indicated more ingenuity than ear. He was born in Manila, Philippines, on a date which he refuses to reveal. His *Selected Poems*, with a preface by Edith Sitwell, will be published in England in 1946.

ROBERT PENN WARREN was born in Kentucky in 1905 and attended Vanderbilt in 1921. After leaving there he studied and taught at the University of California, Yale, Oxford (Rhodes Scholar), Vanderbilt, Louisiana State and the University of Minnesota. He left the latter for a year in 1944 to serve as Curator of Poetry at the Library of Congress. The influence of the Fugitive Group at Vanderbilt, and especially of John Crowe Ransom, nailed his decision to forsake science in favor of poetry. He became a contributor to the Southern Agrarian anthologies, served spells as editor of the *Southern Review* and *Kenyon*, wrote an impressive novel, *Night Rider* (1938), and two books of poems, *XXXVI Poems* (1935) and *Eleven Poems on the Same Theme* (1942). His *Selected Poems* were published in 1944. Warren’s verse reflects conflict of spirit to the point of sometimes seeming deliberately rough and sometimes tortured; but it is always sharp and jewelled with memorable images. The early “Pondy Woods” and the late “Ballad of Billie Potts” are landmarks testifying to the successful collaboration of Warren the novelist and Warren the poet.

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT was born in Boston in 1897 and died there, in an automobile accident, in 1940. His *Selected Poems* were published by New Directions in 1941; his collected poetry is in preparation. In his preface to the former, R. P. Blackmur explains the difficulties in Wheelwright’s style and context. Of the former: “He held lines to be in balance, to continue or to complete a pattern, if the major stresses came out even. The number of unstressed syllables did not count, but their cumulative value did count; hence scansion was variable even within a poem.” Of the latter: “Like Blake, he saw truth in minute particulars, and . . . relished the particulars whether he saw any truth in them or not. He had a kind of naive or direct-eyed shrewdness that made of the oldest ortho-



doxy a fresh heresy, and rendered the immediate observation as absolute insight, and permitted him to mock both." Wheelwright was an architect and a wit, a recluse and a man who got bounced from bars, a Boston Brahmin and a Socialist who ran for office, and his verse is rich with this variety and paradox.

E. B. WHITE was born in Mt. Vernon, New York, in 1899 and edited the *New Yorker* in that lively magazine's formative years. Thereafter he wrote a column, *One Man's Meat*, for Harper's and recently a best-selling juvenile, *Stuart Little*. If wittier, more apparently effortless comedy has been achieved in our time than the ballad satirizing Rivera's attempt to paint Lenin on the walls of Mr. Rockefeller's City—this anthologist would like to see it. Yet, when pressed for an explanation, Mr. White said: "Writing light verse is very heavy work indeed; I get just as exhausted as the major poets."

OSCAR WILLIAMS began writing poetry for the second time in 1937. His first book, *The Golden Darkness*, was published in 1921 when he was 22 years of age by the Yale University Press. During the intervening years, he says, he "neither wrote nor read," but worked as an advertising promotion expert for a number of firms, his last assignment being Chairman for Advertising of the State Democratic Party of Florida in 1936. In 1940 *The Man Coming Toward You* was published and in 1945 *That's All That Matters*. The second book revealed some progress in Williams' effort to sustain beyond the image and single line his macabre imagination.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS was born in 1883 and lives at Rutherford, New Jersey, where he practises medicine. The prose of his novel, *White Mule*, and the short stories, *Life Along the Passaic*, has been called "surgical"—both for its precision and its insistence upon physical detail. But in Williams' poems, which have agitated literary circles for two decades, there is an additional quality—the bird-like lyricism of the usually clipped lines, in which "anti-poetic" language is deliberately used to achieve contrast and new poetic meaning.



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EDMUND WILSON, the present book editor of *The New Yorker* and by many considered the foremost literary critic in the United States, was born in 1895 in New Jersey, attended Princeton, and has written a great variety of books, first poetry and novel (*Poets, Farewell!, I Remember Daisy*), then criticism and travelogue (*Axel's Castle, The American Jitters*), social history and satire (*To the Finland Station, Notebooks of Night*). The celebrated parody of MacLeish was published in the last named book, after its initial appearance in *The New Yorker*, and is as interesting for what it reveals of Wilson's animus against poetry as for what it ridicules in MacLeish.

THOMAS WOLFE's writings have been twice presented as poetry in the six years since he died in 1938. In 1939 Scribners published *The Face of a Nation*, straight highlights from the novels, and in 1945 *A Stone, A Leaf, A Door*, in which Sgt. John S. Barnes had arranged some of the great passages in line and stanza. The controversy had raged during his life, and still rages: Was Wolfe essentially a writer of prose who lacked the discipline to cut away what he called "this constant and almost intolerable effort of memory and desire"? Or was he in fact a poet whose definition of poetry had been too narrow to enable him to perform without the incumbrances of the novel in his proper medium? Wolfe himself testifies to the latter view: "I'd rather be a poet than anything else in the world. God, what I wouldn't give to be a poet!" He was born in North Carolina in 1900, attempted playwriting at the University of North Carolina and at Harvard, taught at New York University, travelled in Europe, felt the influence of Joyce and saw his first novel, *Look Homeward, Angel*, pulled into shape by Maxwell Perkins. *Of Time and the River* appeared in 1935, *Story of a Novel* in 1936, *The Web and the Rock* in 1939 and *You Can't Go Home Again* in 1940.

ELINOR WYLIE was born in New Jersey in 1885 and died in New York in 1928. Her family, like her poetry, was aristocratic. She lived in England for some years, after shocking Washington society with a suc-



cession of impulsive marriages. Her novels, as well as her poems, won an early distinction for their meticulous grace and exquisite subjective perceptions. As the influence of "metaphysical" poets like Donne became more pronounced, and her emotional life deepened, Elinor Wylie came very close to giving her intensely personal idiom a universal elevation. But in spite of her fine craftsmanship, this poet is destined to remain an essentially feminine talent.

W. B. YEATS may be properly compared to Goethe for the increasing development of his art during a long lifetime, and for the energy with which, almost single-handed, he stimulated the birth of a whole national literature. Born in Ireland in 1865, living at times in Paris and London, Yeats was associated with Oscar Wilde, Millarmé and George Moore as a young man; later, as dramatist, with Synge, O'Casey and Lady Gregory; then with Joyce and AE and Pound; finally with Eliot and Auden and Turner. His early poems were dreamily impressionistic. He was a mystic, and even devoted himself to spiritualism for a while. Then he stripped his verse of vague ornament, originating a conversational, but always precise style, to convey more intellectual concepts. Yeats died in 1939. His *Last Poems*, full of defiant passion, political intransigence and lyrical autumn, is an astonishing performance. His epitaph, from the poem "Under Ben Bulbin," reads:

Cast a cold eye  
On life, on death.  
Horseman, pass by!





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